

This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

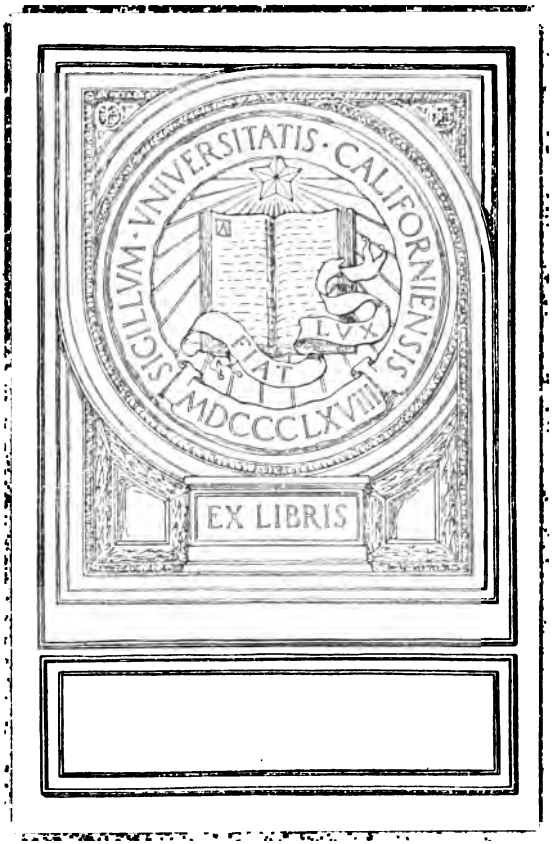
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

Digitized by Google



Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

A

CIRCUMSTANTIAL NARRATIVE

OF

The Campaign in Russia;

EMBELLISHED WITH PLANS

OF THE

BATTLES OF THE MOSKWA

AND

MALO-JAROSLAVITZ.

CONTAINING A

FAITHFUL DESCRIPTION OF THE AFFECTING AND INTERESTING SCENES, OF WHICH THE AUTHOR WAS AN EYE-WITNESS.

BY EUGENE LABAUME,

Captain of the Royal Geographical Engineers, Ex-Officer of the Ordnance of Prince Eugene, Chevalier of the Legion of Honour, and of the Iron Crown. Author of an Abridged History of the Republic of Venice.

TRANSLATED FROM THE LATEST FRENCH EDITION.

THIRD EDITION, CONSIDERABLY IMPROVED.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR SAMUEL LEIGH, IN THE STRAND,

BY W. CLOWES, NORTHUMBERLAND-COURT.

M,DCCC,XV.

Digitized by Google

DC23
L24

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

Digitized by Google

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

The official situation which the Author enjoyed under Prince Eugene enabled him to give a faithful history of the most extraordinary campaign that the annals of war record. His style is simple and unaffected; and though the descriptions which he gives often powerfully interest the feelings, and reach the heart, they bear not the least mark of exaggeration. His recital of the passage of the Wop, the Beresina, and the Niemen, yield not in genuine pathos to any real or fictitious narrative of ancient or modern times, while the simplicity and candour with which he writes are assured pledges of his fidelity. The accuracy and candour of the work have been acknowledged, not only by the French, but the Russians; and the voice of the public has unequivocally declared that of the numerous publications on the Campaign of Russia, this is the most interesting, and the most correct.

The later editions of Labaume were en-

979153 Digitized by Google

riched with much new and valuable matter. The text of the present publication is a faithful translation of the last and most improved edition of the original, while the beautiful episode which our author, with too great deference to the opinion of some cold-hearted critic, had expunged from his work, is retained in the form of notes. This edition of the translation may therefore be considered as more complete, than either of the editions of the original. The whole has been carefully revised, and a great part of it recomposed.

The moderation and reserve with which Labaume speaks of the unprincipled contriver of this infamous and disastrous expedition, are worthy of notice. It is an interesting struggle between the honest indignation of the *man*, and that reverence for his general, which he had ever been taught to consider as the first duty of the *soldier*, and which, in his mind, was associated with the memory of former victories, and much personal obligation. But the English reader, who has no similar restraint on the indignant feelings of his soul, will trace the bloody ca-

Digitized by Google

reer of this execrable tyrant with mingled aversion and horror. The enterprise had no colour of justice. It was prompted by the wildest lust of power, and, in its execution every principle of humanity was outraged. Hurried on by the vain and puerile ambition of planting his eagles on the walls of the ancient capital of the Czars, he neglected every military precaution; he calculated not on the forces that hovered on his rear; he remembered not the rigours of a northern winter; but led to certain destruction the proudest army of which France in her happiest days could boast; and, when he was compelled to retrace his steps with sad discomfiture, our blood curdles at the recital of the wanton destruction which marked his retreat. While he strove with remorseless fury to wreak his revenge on the enemy, he forgot that his own soldiers would be the principal victims of the desolation which he caused. The first division was ordered to plunder and destroy without mercy, that his eyes might be gratified with the sight of human misery. He thought not, he cared not, that the divisions which followed were,

Digitized by Google

by these means, exposed to the horrors of a Russian winter, without food to eat, or one habitation left entire to afford them shelter. Thus perished 500,000 men, the victims of inordinate ambition and savage barbarity.

He received his reward. He was hurled from the throne which he had usurped, and driven an outcast and a fugitive from that country which he had filled with widows and with orphans. We could not wish him a greater punishment than in the retirement of Elba, to muse on this affecting narrative of the unparalleled sufferings of his devoted followers.

He has reascended the throne which he was compelled to abdicate, and again has the inexhaustible resources of France at his command. He professes to have renounced all his favourite schemes of aggrandisement and universal empire. If he be sincere—if he has really learned wisdom in the school of adversity, is it unreasonable to suppose that the perusal of this work may have had some share in producing the happy change; and should he be able, by any possible chance, to resist the formidable forces with which

Digitized by Google

the sovereigns of Europe, justly distrustful of professions so utterly at variance with every former act, are preparing to overwhelm him, and once more commence his wild career of universal conquest, may we not hope that the new constitution, which circumstances, not choice, have obliged him to offer to the French people, will afford a salutary, and a sufficient check: while the Narrative of Labaume, widely circulated in France and in Europe, will generate an abhorrence of war, and render it impossible for him again to find the willing, the deluded, and devoted tools of his unprincipled ambition.

EDMUND BOYCE.

May 30th, 1815.

Digitized by Google

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

I RELATE that which I have seen. A witness of the greatest disasters that ever befell a great nation; a spectator and an actor in every scene of this sad and memorable expedition, I present the reader with no fictitious narrative, artfully arranged, and heightened by false colouring. The events that passed around me were daily recorded, and I now simply endeavour to communicate the impressions which I then felt. It was by the light of the burning of Moscow, that I described the destruction of that unfortunate city. It was on the borders of the Beresina, that I traced the recital of that fatal passage. The plans of the battles of the Moskwa, and Malo-Jaroslavitz, which accompany this work, were taken on the spot, at the command of Prince Eugene.

Digitized by Google

It is scarcely possible to conceive what difficulties I had to surmount in the progress of my work. Compelled, like my companions in arms, to struggle with the most urgent necessities, pierced by the cold, tormented with hunger, a prey to every accumulated horror; uncertain at the rising of the sun, whether I should see its setting rays, and doubtful at night, whether I should witness the morrow's dawn; every thought seemed concentred in the ardent desire to live, that I might perpetuate the memory of what I had seen. Animated by this irresistible feeling, I retraced, each night, the events of the day, sitting beside a wretched fire, under a temperature of twenty or twenty-two degrees below the freezing point, and surrounded by the dying and the dead. The knife with which I had carved my scanty morsel of horse-flesh, was employed in cutting a raven's quill, and a little gunpowder, mixed with some melted snow, in the hollow of my hand, served me for ink and inkstand.

I have composed this work without personal ill-will, and without prejudice; yet I

Digitized by Google

must confess, that during the recital of the most horrible enterprise which the genius of ambition had ever conceived, I could often scarcely restrain my indignation against the author of all our misfortunes. But the respect with which his former well-earned reputation had inspired me, and the memory of the glorious victories that I had witnessed, and the honours of which I had shared, compelled me to upbraid that conqueror, not in the language of defamation, but by a simple narration of facts.

Having constantly before me the mournful image of a crowd of warriors doomed to perish miserably in remote deserts, I was sustained by the hope of rendering my feeble homage to a courage acknowledged even by their enemies; and to exploits the more heroic, since their object was no longer the safety of their country, nor even of their lives, but the preservation of their fame. I shall account myself most happy, if my reader is convinced, that in the midst of so many disasters, our brave soldiers were always worthy of themselves; that they stained not their ancient renown, and

Digitized by Google

that, always formidable to their enemies, they were conquered by the elements alone.

Encouraged by the favourable reception which the three first editions of my work have received, I have endeavoured to improve this new edition, by retrenching what was peculiar to the fourth corps, and relating more fully the operations of the grand army. The narrations of the battles of the Moskwa, and of Polotsk, the engagement of Taroutina, the masterly retreat of the Duke of Elchingen, and, above all, the passage of the Beresina, have been considerably enlarged, from the information which has been kindly furnished by many officers who escaped from the disasters of this fatal campaign.

I beg leave to express my sincere gratitude to those who are daily presenting me with new facts, and to assure them that I shall receive with the greatest pleasure every article of intelligence, and every hint of advice, which they may think proper to transmit.

The kind approbation with which numerous persons celebrated for their talents and

Digitized by Google

virtues have honoured me, imposes on me the sacred duty of neglecting nothing which can add to the interest of my narrative, or render it worthy of the dignity of the subject. The best manner in which I can repay the patronage of the public, is to profit by every hint which can increase the value of my work.

For the convenience of persons who purchased the first edition of Labaume, the Map of the Countries between Paris and Moscow, may be had separately, price 2s. coloured.

P. S. An Authentic Work of peculiar interest is just published, translated from the French of Monsieur Giraud, entitled, The Campaign of Paris, in 1814: it may be considered as a sequel to Labaume's Narrative. Price 6s. boards, embellished with the Plan of the attack on Paris, and a Map of the Environs.

Digitized by Google

A

CIRCUMSTANTIAL NARRATIVE

OF THE

CAMPAIGN IN RUSSIA.

PART I.—BOOK I.

WILNA.

IF we were to look into our annals for the most brilliant period of our glory, we should find that France had never been more powerful than after the treaty of Tilsit. Spain, under the name of an ally, was in reality one of our provinces, whence we were supplied with money, men, and ships. Italy, wisely governed by a prince who was at once a skilful warrior and an able politician, being subject to, and obeying the same laws as the French empire, enjoyed an equal share of prosperity with ourselves; and saw with pride that her legions, transported to the Baltic, had given proofs of the noblest courage, in order to procure for France a peace as glorious as it

Digitized by Google

was beneficial. Germany, alarmed by our colossal aggrandizement, far from opposing our successes, endeavoured merely to ensure her own existence, by a submission to all the great changes which subverted the German constitution. England alone, the only constant opponent of an ambition so fatal to her own, saw in the prosperity of Napoleon a new cause of fear to herself, and of terror to the continent. Jealous of the honour of circumscribing that boundless ambition, she anxiously represented to the sovereigns of the north how much it was their interest to arrest the rapidly-increasing progress of our excessive power. Vain efforts! these monarchs had not yet acquired the requisite degree of conviction, that they must all be united to crush the giant who wished to devour them. Napoleon's passion for invasion suggested to him, on his return from Tilsit, the idea of declaring an unjust war on Spain; which not only tarnished his laurels, but afterwards furnished his enemies with the long-wished-for occasion of subverting a power so formidable.

A weak prince nominally presided over that unhappy peninsula; but a perfidious minister, treacherous towards his country, and ungrateful to his king and benefactor, in reality governed the state with a partial hand; and by the most abject deference to the evil counsels of foreigners,

Digitized by Google

degraded the nation, whose rights he seemed to have usurped only to drag it into long and shameful servitude. The credulity of the father, and the moderation of the son, alike promoted his criminal views. He incensed them against each other, and then, under the pretext of reconciling them, and feigning the sincerest friendship for both, he promised his mediation; but, arrived at Bayonne, he carried off the two monarchs, to dispose of their crown. The brave Castilians, who had been our most faithful allies, indignant at this unheard-of outrage, now became our irreconcilable enemies. They immortalized themselves by their noble perseverance, and they robbed us of our character as invincible. It was a fatal attempt to accomplish a project the most impolitic, and which presents, in the history of a civilized nation, an example of atrocious ingratitude, unparalleled even amongst barbarians.

Spain, notwithstanding its proximity to France, was little known; and the character of its inhabitants was still less understood. This ignorance misled the conqueror, and induced him to attempt an unfortunate invasion; the miseries of which will however be easily forgotten, when we consider that, like the campaign of Moscow, it was the primitive cause of those events which led to the happy deliverance of the world.

Digitized by Google

It does not enter into my plan to recapitulate an ill-fated aggression, which made enemies of two nations equally generous; and who, always united by a reciprocal esteem, would yet have retained the most friendly sentiments, had it not been for the perfidious politics of the tyrant. The struggle which ensued, memorable for its obstinacy and its vicissitudes, will furnish the historian with an interesting subject, and the military man with ample matter for meditation. I shall only briefly observe, that Providence appears to have excited in Napoleon the idea of these two unjust wars, to convince the Spaniards and Russians, that an alliance with the vicious will unavoidably prove fatal: and this instrument, which the Almighty had employed to accomplish his purpose, was now precipitated from error to error, to shew that tyranny is a crime against the common and inalienable rights of man, and that it may, at all times, be successfully opposed by those who rally round the banners of justice.

Whilst Napoleon vainly endeavoured to chase the English from the peninsula, a new storm was gathering in Germany. Austria, whom he had so often humbled, could not tamely submit to the disgraceful yoke under which her defeats had placed her. The resistance of the Spaniards, and the powerful armaments of England, offered her

Digitized by Google

a favourable opportunity for again having recourse to arms, and endeavouring to recover the territories which she had lost, and that political preponderance of which she had always been so jealous.

The new war against Austria only opened a new field of triumph to the French. Landshut, Eckmuhl, and Ratisbon, having been attacked with brilliant success, prepared the way, at the end of four months, for one of the most memorable victories. The field of Wagram saw the prodigies of Austerlitz renewed, and secured to France the most glorious campaign, and the most decisive results.

The treaty of Vienna, which gave us peace, brought several wealthy provinces under our dominion. It aggrandized Wurtemberg and Bavaria, and seemed to promise to Poland her complete re-establishment. But that treaty, dictated by a power that grasped at every thing, might, like those which preceded it, have contained the seeds of fresh contention, if the most august and most unexpected alliance had not crowned the fortune of the conqueror.

The sovereign of the Austrian empire, tired of a resistance so long fatal to his arms, fancied for a moment, that he obeyed his fate in yielding to a man to whom every one had submitted. He sacrificed his glory, and even his offspring, to ob-

Digitized by Google

tain peace; thus realizing those fabulous times, when magnanimous princes devoted their daughters to appease the wrath of some demon who ravaged their country.

Of all the blessings which chance had bestowed upon him, that marriage was undoubtedly the greatest; since it secured, for ever, the destiny of a man, who, having risen from the humblest rank in society, had now become allied to a powerful monarch. But, seduced by a prosperity so dazzling, he was yet dissatisfied; and, forming new, and romantic, and impious projects, he hazarded all that he had acquired. He wearied his good genius, and provoked his fate. To his own folly alone is it to be attributed, that that which was so well calculated to cement his power, became the cause of his ruin.

That period ought to have been esteemed the happiest of Napoleon's life. What more could the wildest ambition desire? From a private individual, he saw himself raised to the first throne in the world; his reign had been one continued series of victories; and, to complete his happiness, a son, the object of his most ardent wishes, was born to succeed him. The people, though oppressed under his government, became accustomed to it, and seemed desirous to secure the crown to his family. All the foreign princes who were subjected to his power were his vassals.

Digitized by Google

They maintained his troops, and supplied him with money to gratify his luxury and his pleasures. In short, all obeyed him. Nothing was wanting to make him happy! nothing, if he could be happy who possessed not a love of justice. To that sentiment Napoleon had ever been a stranger, and, consequently, knew not either enjoyment or repose. Agitated by a restless spirit, and tormented by ungovernable ambition, the very excess of his fortune was his ruin.—Aiming at that which it was impossible to obtain, and ignorant of human nature, he forgot every principle of honour and humanity—he forgot himself.

The continent seemed disposed to submit to the great changes which Napoleon had effected; and the common people, whose limited conceptions seldom penetrate into the dark minds of ambitious monarchs, thought that the surprising alliance between this man and an archduchess, much satisfy all his immoderate desires. They also expected, that the tender feelings of a parent would teach him, that a throne is not so firmly cemented by ambitious conquests, purchased by blood and by tears, as by wise institutions, which, making a government beloved, ensure its duration. The being never existed who possessed ampler means for promoting the happiness of mankind. Nothing was required but justice and

Digitized by Google

prudence. The nation expected these from him, and granted him that unlimited confidence, which he afterwards so cruelly abused. Posterity will hesitate to decide whether Napoleon be more culpable on account of the crimes which he has committed, or the good that he might have done, but on which he bestowed not a single thought.

This man, who will be produced by the future historian, as the enigma of the human heart, might have gained the admiration of the universe, had he devoted to the cultivation of virtue those talents which were prostituted to the commission of every crime; but instead of considering with calmness and moderation, how he might best employ his vast resources, he ruminated on projects beyond the power of man to execute; forgetting what innumerable victims must be sacrificed in the vain attempt. Continually tormented by spleen and melancholy, the least contradiction irritated him. The very idea that there existed a nation sufficiently great and generous to despise his proposals, and resist his fatal influence, lacerated his bosom, and poisoned the happiest moments of his glory.

In the hope of conquering that invincible enemy, he vainly endeavoured to grasp the extremities of Europe. Scarcely did he think that he had secured him on one side, than he escaped on the other. Infuriated at the disappointment of

Digitized by Google

his chimerical plans, he aspired at universal despotism, for no other reason, than because a nation isolated from the continent, and profiting by its happy situation, had refused to submit to his intolerable yoke.

In the hope of realizing his fatal systems he overstepped the natural boundaries of France. He allotted to her a chimerical and romantic destiny, and terrified himself with the groundless apprehension, that Russia might place herself on the ancient throne of Constantine, and command the two seas by which Europe is surrounded. He then assumed the prophet, predicting distant disasters to his country, and sacrificed the present generation to the uncertain happiness of posterity.

Deceived by the splendour of his former exploits, he disdained the counsel of his wisest ministers. The talents requisite for the highest offices of state consisted in a blind submission to his absurd pretensions; and to become the most abject slave was the readiest way to honour and emolument. Despot over his people and his armies, and a slave to his own ungovernable passions, he carried his ambitious views to the extremities of the globe, and aspired to the empire of the world. Misled by his rash and hasty temper, he adopted a false line of politics, and converted in the north, as he had done before in the south,

Digitized by Google

the most useful and powerful of his allies, into a dangerous enemy.

Infatuated by an excess of prosperity, he fancied that the neighbouring powers beheld him with envy; and, judging of others by himself, he imagined that Russia must look with secret jealousy on the union between the most ancient and the most modern empires. Full of this idea, he pursued his plans of devastation; and desiring, as he said, that his dynasty might soon become the most ancient in Europe, he endeavoured to sanction his usurpation by dethroning every legitimate prince in order to bestow their crowns on his brothers, who, too effeminate to second him in his tyranny, or rival him in his exploits, only shone like pale satellites around an ill-boding star.

The treaty of Tilsit appeared but a truce to those who knew Napoleon's character. Every one who compared the constantly-growing power of the two great empires, predicted an approaching rupture, and foresaw, in their systematic plans of aggrandisement, the future destruction of the gigantic edifice which both were erecting. The distance which had formerly separated them, had likewise separated their interests; but the conquests of France, having rendered her a neighbour of Russia, every thing presaged that a ter-

Digitized by Google

rible struggle must, ere long, ensue between those rival powers, the shock of which would convulse the world.

For more than two years, Russia and France had maintained a warlike attitude; but at length Napoleon having reinforced the garrison of Dantzic, consisting of a strong body of troops, and completed the cavalry, the artillery-train, and the military equipages, forbore no longer to overwhelm Russia with reproaches. Forgetful that, since the Treaty of Tilsit, he had not only invaded Holland, and the Hanse-towns, but likewise the duchy of Oldenburg, which belonged to the sister of Alexander, he imputed to the latter as a crime, that he had renewed a commercial intercourse with England.

Nothing of a hostile nature had yet transpired, except the famous *sênatus consulte**, which organized the empire into *cohortes*, *bans*, and *arrière bans*†. Thus France was on the point of being engaged in the most bloody contest which it had ever sustained, and one half of Europe was marching against the other, while Napoleon had not deigned to afford the least intimation of it to the senate; nor had that body ventured to demand

* Sitting of the Senate, 10th March, 1812.

† Three classes into which the men were divided, from 25 to 60 years of age, for the defence of the frontiers and the coasts.

Digitized by Google

from him any reason for a war, in which France was about to exhaust her treasures and her blood.

Public opinion was yet undecided with regard to the motive and the object of all these armaments. When the climate of Russia was considered, a quarrel with her offered so few advantages, and so many chances of mortification and defeat, that it could not be credited that we were about to provoke an attack, where we had every thing to lose and nothing to gain. Some believed that the three great empires had formed a coalition to dismember Turkey, and to strike a deadly blow at the establishments which the English had formed in Asia. But they who knew how enraged Napoleon had been when the senate of Petersburg refused to give him the sister of Alexander as his wife, did not doubt that all our preparations would be directed against the north. The mission of Colonel Czernichew, and especially his precipitate departure, after the bribery which he had employed to discover the secrets of state, evidently proved that a contention would soon arise between these two powerful rivals.

From that moment, France made immense preparations. Numerous legions hastened from the banks of the Tagus to those of the Oder; and the same soldiers who lately had encamped on the

Digitized by Google

fertile plains of Lombardy, saw themselves transported, in less than three months, to the barren sands of Poland.

Under these circumstances all eyes were turned towards Prussia, anxious to discover which party she would espouse. Her fortresses, and her whole territory, were occupied by our armies; nevertheless, an alliance with us appeared so opposite to her true policy, and so prejudicial to her interests, that, in spite of the constraint and the subjugation in which we held her, she long hesitated to declare herself. At last, to the surprise of all the world, we learned that she had decided in our favour*: but they who knew in what manner Napoleon contracted all his alliances, observed that Prussia did not declare for us till Berlin was pressed on all sides, and the duke of Reggio (Oudinot) was on the point of entering it as a conqueror. The King of Prussia was shortly after compelled to abandon his capital, and leave the command of it to the French generals.

At this time appeared another treaty of alliance between France and Austria, by which it was stipulated, that each of the two contracting powers should furnish the other with an auxiliary corps

* Treaty of Alliance (24 Feb. 1812), between His Majesty the Emperor and King, and His Majesty the King of Prussia.

Digitized by Google

of thirty thousand men, in case of attack. Napoleon, pretending that he was threatened by Russia, claimed and obtained the promised succour, which was put under the command of the prince of Schwartzenberg. Thus Napoleon tyrannised over kings, as Robespierre tyrannised over the people. No one could remain neutral under either. The love of peace was regarded as treason; and moderation considered as a crime.

If the world was surprised at beholding the Austrians and Russians accept our alliance, it was not less astonished at learning that Sweden had rejected our friendship. That nation, the only one on the continent interested in the success of our expedition against Russia, was so indignant at our invasion of Pomerania, and the injury done to the commerce of Stralsund, that she refused the only opportunity of avenging the misfortunes of Charles XII.; preferring to renounce the provinces of which she had been despoiled, rather than contract an alliance with us, of which the perfidy of our chief offered no guarantee.

The roads of Germany were covered with innumerable troops, who, observing the most admirable discipline in their march, bent their course towards the Oder.

The King of Westphalia (Jerome Buonaparte), at the head of his guards and of two divisions, had already crossed that river, as well as the

Digitized by Google

Bavarians and Saxons. The first corps was at Stettin, the third marched in that direction; and the fourth, having arrived at Glogau, replaced the Westphalians, who proceeded towards Warsaw.

The composition of our army was curious and imposing. Were I to enumerate the different troops, it would remind my reader of the description of Homer, when he speaks of the various nations who marched to the conquest of Troy. In the month of April the grand army consisted of eight corps of infantry, each of them containing at least three divisions (the first had five divisions), and one body of cavalry. To these were joined the imperial guards, composed of about fifty thousand men; and three great corps of cavalry under the name of the reserve. The total of our forces, exclusive of the Austrians, may have amounted to four hundred thousand infantry, and sixty thousand cavalry. Nearly twelve hundred pieces of cannon, distributed amongst the different corps, constituted our artillery.

The Prince of Eckmuhl (Davoust) had long commanded the five divisions, which constituted the first corps of the army. The second was intrusted to the Duke of Reggio (Oudinot). The third, to the Duke of Elchingen (Ney). The fourth, known by the name of the *Army of Italy*, and which contained the royal guards, was com-

Digitized by Google

manded by the Prince Viceroy (Eugene Beauharnois). Prince Poniatowski at the head of his Poles, formed the fifth corps. The Bavarians, incorporated into the sixth, were under the orders of Count Gouvion St. Cyr. The Saxons were counted as the seventh corps, commanded by General Regnier. The Westphalians, marching under the orders of their king (Jerome Buonaparte), took rank in the army as the eighth corps. Only a skeleton of the ninth was formed, but it was destined for the Duke of Belluno (Victor); and, lastly, the tenth corps, commanded by marshal the Duke of Tarentum, was composed of Prussians under General Grawert, and the division of General Grandjean, and included no French but Generals Richard and Bachelu, and the troops of artillery.

The Russian army opposed to us, was divided into two corps, under the denomination of first and second Army of the West; the one commanded by General Barclay de Tolly, and the other by Prince Bagration. The number of divisions amounted to forty-seven, amongst which eight consisted of cavalry. The Emperor Alexander, who, on the 26th of April, arrived at Wilna with all his staff, had been long prepared to repel our attacks. But those who had studied our system of war, strenuously advised that monarch not to hazard a battle, being well assured

Digitized by Google

that Napoleon's ambition would lead him into savage countries, which, during the rigour of winter, would become the grave of his armies.

Although Prussia had declared for us, prudence required that we should mistrust an alliance exacted by force. The French garrisons in the different fortified places, guarded them with the utmost care, particularly Glogau, where the fourth corps was assembled. Its vicinity to Breslau, whither the King of Prussia had retired with the remainder of his troops, naturally awakened our fears, and induced the governor to take every precaution against a *coup de main*, which might have proved fatal to the enterprises of France.

The fourth corps, which arrived from Italy, under the denomination of the *Army of Observation*, seemed, from its title, to be destined alternately to advance in front of the grand army, and to observe its flanks, and lastly, to rejoin it when great events required its assistance. Having had the honour to belong to this corps, I shall more particularly describe its exploits during this memorable campaign. Its operations, when separated from the grand army, were more interesting than those of the other corps, and it participated in all the grand affairs, which signalized our march to Moscow. The calamities of

Digitized by Google

our disastrous retreat were equally shared by the whole army.

The Viceroy (Eugene Beauharnois), before he was appointed to the fourth corps, which had in the interim been under the orders of the Duke of Abrantes (Junot), was called to Paris, where his frequent conferences with the Emperor led to the belief that he was destined to higher functions than those which attached to the command of one corps of the army. The rumour had long been spread that Napoleon, desirous of terminating in person the Spanish war, had announced in council that he intended to confide the government of the empire to a young prince, if circumstances should oblige him to absent himself from the capital. But these brilliant hopes, which since the repudiation of his mother seemed to have no foundation, were soon destroyed. The Viceroy, having received his instructions seven or eight days after his arrival in Paris, took the road to Poland, and arrived at Glogau on the 12th of May.

While he remained at Glogau, he reviewed the troops which had been placed under his orders, and was particularly pleased with the fine appearance of the fifteenth division, consisting solely of Italians, and amounting to thirteen thousand men. The soldiers who composed it were so ex-

Digitized by Google

cellently disciplined, that General Pino, though first captain of the royal guards, deemed it an honour to hold an equal rank among them.

The fourth corps was to assemble at Plock. The Bavarian army was there already; and the Prince Viceroy arrived in this town by way of Posen, a few days before his army. He employed this time in reconnoitring the banks of the Narew, and in uniting the lines of defence formed by this river, with those of the lakes which extend from Angerburgh to Joannisburgh. His highness particularly examined the fortress of Modlin, whither the King of Westphalia had also proceeded. The dispositions which followed the conference between these princes appeared to indicate that the banks of the Bug and of the Narew would be the theatre of war. But a few days afterwards, all eyes were directed towards the Emperor, who had arrived at Thorn. The Viceroy went to pay his respects to him, and on his return made the necessary preparations to effect a movement on the 4th of June.

On that day our corps marched for Soldau, which it reached on the 6th. The troops were allowed a halt of two days, which were employed in constructing ovens for the use of the army. We then marched to Villemberg, where we likewise remained two days; and three days afterwards we arrived at Rastembourg, a neat little

Digitized by Google

town surrounded by lakes. It afforded a valuable supply of provisions to the army, being the largest and most populous town we had passed through since our departure from Glogau. From Rastembourg we marched to Lötzen, and afterwards to Oletzko, the last town in East-Prussia. Two leagues further on we entered Poland, and soon perceived the striking difference between these two countries. In the one, the houses are clean and well built; in the other, they are dirty and of a clumsy construction. The inhabitants of the former are civil and hospitable; those of the latter consisted chiefly of filthy and disgusting Jews. Many of the petty seigneurs were too indigent to maintain the proper splendour of their rank; but the higher orders of the nobility are brave, magnificent, and generous. Unsullied honour and ardent patriotism will ever constitute them true heroes. The peasantry are few in number, and this defect in the population, joined to the barrenness of the soil, accounts for the uncultivated state of the country. The sandy plains of Poland, planted only with bad rye, seem doomed to lasting sterility.

We arrived at Kalwary, a considerable town filled with Jews. At Marienpol we found a similar population. Tired of beholding the numbers, and the disgusting appearance of these people, we used to say that Poland was but another

Digitized by Google

Judea, in which a Polonese was rarely to be seen.

During this march, Napoleon left Thorn, and visited the fortress of Dantzic, which his thirst for dominion made him regard as one of the most important in his empire. Thence he went to Osterode, and passed rapidly through the towns of Leipstadt and Kreutzbourg, in the neighbourhood of Heilsberg, Eylau, and Friedland, which had been the theatre of his greatest military exploits. On his arrival at Königsberg, he made every preparation for his great enterprise. He reviewed numerous divisions, visited the fortress of Pillau, and a few days afterwards, marching with the centre of his army, traversed the Prégel as far as Gumbinnen.

Napoleon hoped to intimidate Russia by his preparations, and to compel her to submit to his dictates, while he disregarded every thing which could possibly lead to a friendly understanding with Russia, or to the maintenance of peace. Russia, with an excess of moderation, seldom to be met with in great powers, consented that France should retain a garrison in Dantzic; but she required, and with justice, the evacuation of Prussia, that a country unoccupied by the troops of either power might be left between these two great empires. These wise and moderate conditions were called by Napoleon, *arrogant and*

Digitized by Google

altogether extraordinary demands !* and on the formal refusal of Russia to listen to the embassy of Count Lauriston, without these preliminaries, Napoleon was absolutely enraged, and exclaimed in the tone of phrensy which the slightest contradiction always excited, "*The vanquished assume the tone of conquerors. A fatality involves them; let their destinies be fulfilled.*" Leaving Gumbinnen that very instant, he went to Wilkowiski, 22d of June, 1812, and issued the following proclamation in his general orders.

SOLDIERS,

"The second Polish war is begun. The first terminated at Friedland and at Tilsit. At Tilsit, Russia vowed an eternal alliance with France, and war with England. She now breaks her vows, and refuses to give any explanation of her strange conduct, until the French eagles have repassed the Rhine and left our allies at her mercy.

"Russia is hurried away by a fatality! Her destinies will be fulfilled. Does she think us degenerated? Are we no more the soldiers who fought at Austerlitz? She places us between dishonour and war. Our choice cannot

* Second Bulletin of the Grand Army.

Digitized by Google

" be difficult. Let us then march forward. Let " us cross the Niemen, and carry the war into " her country. This second Polish war will be " as glorious for the French arms as the first has " been: but the peace we shall conclude, will " carry with it its own guarantee, and will termi- " nate the fatal influence which Russia, for fifty " years past, has exercised in Europe."

This proclamation, remarkable for its excessive boasting, and for the mania by which Napoleon was possessed, of giving the form of an oracle to every thing that he said, reached us at Kalwary. Though it was but a monotonous repetition of the same ideas so often expressed, it excited the ardour of our soldiers, always ready to listen to any thing flattering to their courage. Elated with the idea of treading on Russian ground, they proudly contemplated the commencement of the second Polish war, and were eager to leave behind them a river at which they had closed their victorious career at the termination of the first war. The word Niemen inflamed their imagination. They burned to pass it: and this desire was the more natural, as, independent of the spirit of conquest, the miserable state of Poland every day augmented our sufferings and privations. To silence our complaints, the territory of Russia was always held out to us as the promised land.

The Russian army opposed to ours, was com-

Digitized by Google

posed of six divisions. The first, twenty thousand strong, and commanded by the Prince of Wittgenstein, occupied Rossiena and Keidanoui. The second corps, consisting likewise of twenty thousand men, under the orders of General Bagawout, guarded Kowno. The third, consisting of twenty-four thousand men, under General Schomoaloff, was posted at New-Troki. The fourth corps, commanded by General Tutchkoff, was stationed between New-Troki and Lida. These four divisions, together with the guards, formed what the Russians called the *First Army of the West*. The second army comprised the fifth corps, amounting to forty thousand men, and the sixth corps, called that of Doctorow, consisting of eighteen thousand men. This second army, commanded by Prince Bagration, was encamped at Grodno, Lida, and throughout Wolhynia. General Markoff organized in this province the ninth and fifteenth divisions, which were to form the seventh corps. Being afterwards recalled to the army of the centre, he left the command of Wolhynia to General Tormason, who collected a new corps destined to act against the duchy of Warsaw.

Such was the position of the Russians beyond the Niemen, when the King of Naples (Murat), who commanded our cavalry, established his head-quarters within two leagues on this side of

Digitized by Google

the river (23d June). He had with him the two corps of cavalry, commanded by Generals Nansouty and Montbrun, each composed of three divisions. The first corps took post at the opening of the great forest of Pilwisky. The second corps and the guards marched in the rear. The third, fourth, and sixth corps, advanced by the Marienpol, and marched at a day's distance from each other. The King of Westphalia, with the fifth, seventh, and eighth corps, directed his march to Grodno, up the Narew, and facing the army of Prince Bagration.

The pontoons under the orders of General Eblé, arrived the same day at the Niemen. Napoleon, disguised as a private Polish soldier, and in company with the General of the engineers Haxo, then visited the line of the Niemen, and from the heights which command Kowno, discovered the most advantageous point. About eight o'clock at night, the army was put in motion. Three light companies of the division of Morand (first division of the first corps) passed the Niemen, and protected the construction of three bridges, which were thrown across the river; where five years before, the two emperors had sworn eternal friendship.

At daybreak, that is to say, about one o'clock in the morning, we were close to Kowno. Ge-

Digitized by Google

neral Pajol, having pushed forward the advanced-guard, occupied the town with one battalion, and drove before him the enemy's cavalry, which retired as we advanced. On the 24th and 25th, the army continued to cross the river at the three bridges, which had been completed in one night. In the meantime, Napoleon, having arrived at Kowno, caused another bridge to be thrown across the Wilia, near that town: while the King of Naples (Murat) marched towards Zismori, and the Marshals, Prince of Eckmuhl (Davoust) and Duke of Elchingen (Ney), went the one to Roumchichki, and the other to Kormelov. The following day (27th June) our light cavalry was within ten leagues of Wilna.

The day after, about two o'clock in the morning, the King of Naples continued his march, supported by the division of cavalry of General Bruyères, and by the first corps. The Russians fell back on all sides behind the Wilia, after burning the bridge and their magazines. A deputation, consisting of the principal inhabitants of Wilna, now delivered to Napoleon the keys of the town. He entered it about noon, and proceeded immediately to the advanced posts of General Bruyères, to ascertain the direction in which the enemy had retreated. They were pursued on the left of the Wilia, when Octave de Segur, captain

Digitized by Google

of hussars, was wounded and taken prisoner in a charge of cavalry. This distinguished officer was the first, in this campaign, who fell into the hands of the Russians.

The point which Napoleon had chosen to pass the Niemen was very advantageous, Kowno being commanded by a high mountain on our side, which completely overhung the town. But if this position had been even less favourable to us, it was not the intention of the Russians to oppose our first efforts. It is said that the Emperor Alexander had made every preparation to dispute the passage of the Niemen; but that at the moment at which the attack was to have commenced, General Barclay de Tolly, throwing himself at the feet of his master, entreated him not to combat a formidable army which nothing could resist; adding, that Napoleon should be suffered to pass like a torrent, keeping their forces unbroken in reserve, to be employed against him when famine and the inclemency of the season had thinned his ranks. I will not vouch for the authenticity of this anecdote: but it will not be thought improbable when it is recollected that the Emperor Alexander, after having remained six weeks at Wilna, inspecting his armies and reconnoitring the principal points which were capable of defence, suddenly abandoned this line without

Digitized by Google

fighting, and ordered the retreat across the Dwina and the Dnieper.

On our arrival at Wilna we read the proclamation which the Emperor of Russia had issued when he learned that the French troops had passed the Niemen. It paints so truly the magnanimity and the equity of Alexander, that, on comparing it with the proclamation of Napoleon published at Wilkowiski, and breathing a spirit of unbounded arrogance and injustice, the reader may obtain a perfect knowledge of the characters of these two conquerors, on whom the eyes of the world were then fixed. It was thus worded :—

"*Wilna, the 25th of June*, 1812.

"We had long observed, on the part of the "Emperor of the French, the most hostile pro- "ceedings towards Russia; but we had always "hoped to avert them by conciliatory and pa- "cific measures. At length, experiencing a "continued renewal of direct and evident ag- "gression, notwithstanding our earnest desire to "maintain tranquillity, we were compelled to "complete and to assemble our armies. But even "then, we flattered ourselves that a reconcilia- "tion might be produced while we remained on "the frontiers of our empire, and without vio- "lating one principle of peace, were prepared

Digitized by Google

"only to act in our own defence. All these conciliatory and pacific measures could not preserve "the tranquillity which we desired. The Emperor of the French, by suddenly attacking our "army at Kowno, has been the first to declare "war. As nothing, therefore, could inspire him "with those friendly sentiments which possessed "our bosoms, we have no choice but to oppose "our forces to those of the enemy, invoking the "aid of the Almighty, the witness and the defender of the truth. It is unnecessary for me to "recall to the minds of the generals, the officers, "or the soldiers, their duty and their bravery. "The blood of the valiant Selavonians flows in "their veins. Warriors! you defend your religion, your country, and your liberty! I am "with you. God is against the aggressor.

(Signed) "ALEXANDER."

While the whole of our army was concentrated near Wilna, the second Russian corps, under General Bagawout, effected its retreat across the Dwina. Prince Wittgenstein likewise was retreating to Wilkomer, since the Duke of Reggio (Oudinot), by marching on Janow and Chatoui, had forced him to abandon Samogitia. On the 26th they met near Develtovo. A smart cannonade commenced, but Prince Wittgenstein being driven from his position, and pursued by our

Digitized by Google

troops as far as the Dwina, passed the bridge thrown over this river with so much precipitation, that he had not time to burn it.

The Russians being repulsed beyond the river, the fifth, seventh, and eighth corps, under the orders of Prince Poniatowski and the King of Westphalia (Jerome Buonaparte), took possession of Grodno. The dilatoriness with which this last general executed his manœuvres, permitted the second army of the west, under Prince Bragration, to intrench itself in a strong position, and resist all their attacks. By a happy employment of his numerous corps of cossacks, commanded by the Hetman Platoff, he would, no doubt, have long defended the provinces confided to him, if, after the evacuation of Wilna, he had not been ordered to join General Barclay de Tolly. Prince Eckmuhl (Davoust) was instantly detached from our centre, to occupy the road to Minsk, to prevent their junction, and direct the operations of the King of Westphalia, with whom the Emperor was much displeased. But Jerome, unwilling to submit to an order so humiliating to his vanity, threw up his command, and obtained leave to return to his kingdom.

On the 29th of June, the fourth corps, which had hitherto remained in observation behind the Niemen, came in sight of this long-desired river. On arriving at Pilony, the place appointed for

Digitized by Google

our passage, we found the Viceroy, the Duke of Abrantes (Junot), and all the staff, who, notwithstanding the rainy weather, were busy in constructing a bridge. The artillery of the royal guards was posted on an eminence commanding the opposite shore. This was a wise but useless precaution; for, on reconnoitring beyond the Niemen, we learned that every thing was perfectly tranquil on that side.

We now dismissed all apprehension with regard to the success of our passage; for an aide-de-camp of the Viceroy, sent with a message to Napoleon, had informed us that our troops, after having passed the defile from Kowno to Roumchichki without opposition, were arrived at Zismori; that even the positions between Rouikontoui and Wilna had been but slightly defended by the Russians; and that having, moreover, constructed no redoubts on the heights, within two leagues of this town, the Emperor had entered it on the 28th instant, preceded by the Polish Uhlans of the 8th regiment, commanded by Prince Radzivil. The report of this officer mentioned that the suburbs had suffered a little from the rapacity of our soldiers, but order having been speedily re-established, every thing returned to its natural course. He likewise added, that this great and populous town afforded ample sup-

Digitized by Google

plies for the army, and was favourably disposed towards the views of Napoleon.

Our short stay at Pilony, during which the rain beat tempestuously, was marked by such extraordinary disasters, that any man, without being superstitious, would have regarded them as the presage of our future misfortunes. In this wretched village, the Viceroy himself had no house to shelter him; we were heaped upon one another under some wretched sheds, or exposed to all the inclemencies of the weather. An extreme scarcity made us anticipate the horrors of famine. The rain fell in torrents, and overwhelmed both men and horses. The first escaped, but the badness of the roads completed the destruction of the latter. They were seen dropping by hundreds in the environs of Pilony. The road was covered with dead horses, overturned waggons, and scattered baggage. It was in the month of July that we suffered thus from cold, and rain, and hunger. The effects of the storm were widely felt. It was said that a thunderbolt fell on the bivouac of the grenadiers of the guard at Zismori, and destroyed many persons. So many calamities excited within us sad forebodings of the future, and every one began to dread the event of an enterprise, the commencement of which was so disastrous; but the sun reappeared

Digitized by Google

on the horizon, the clouds dispersed, our fears were scattered with them, and from that moment we thought that the fine season would last for ever.

The following day, the thirteenth and fourteenth divisions, under Generals Delzons and Broussier, quietly effected their passage; and the day after (1st July) the royal guards, followed by the division of Pino, effected theirs. Thus all the Italian troops passed the Niemen in one body, in presence of their Viceroy. They expressed their sense of this honour by spontaneous acclamations; and the prince must, in his turn, have felt great satisfaction at beholding the soldiers whom he had raised, marching undismayed into an enemy's country; and at a distance of six hundred leagues from their native soil, preserving the same discipline and the same fine appearance, as when manœuvring in front of his palace.

Scarcely had we reached the opposite shore, when we seemed to breathe a new air. The roads indeed were dreadfully bad, the forests gloomy, and the villages completely deserted; but the imagination, inflamed by a spirit of conquest, was enchanted with every thing that it saw, and cherished illusions which were but too soon destroyed.

After a march of two hours through marshy ground, we arrived at the town of Kroni (1st July),

Digitized by Google

in which the *chateau* and all the houses are built of wood. I make this observation here, because most of the villages in Russia are thus constructed. Whenever I find them otherwise I shall remark it. We found some brandy in Kroui, which the soldiers seized with great avidity. This place not being inhabited by any Jews, the houses were all deserted, which convinced us that the enemy, in order to ruin the country through which we were to pass, and deprive us of all means of subsistence, had carried along with them the inhabitants and the cattle.

The next day (2d July) we received orders to march to Zismori, to regain the great road which the Emperor had taken. Arrived in this large town, we found only some Jews, still overwhelmed with terror at the horrible tumult which the passage of our troops had occasioned. The first orders were to halt here, but on the arrival of the Viceroy, the staff continued their route to Melangani, leaving the division of Pino at Zismori, and those of Generals Delzons and Broussier in the environs of Strasounouï.

The following day (3d July) we proceeded to Ricontouï, a miserable village, with a little *chateau* built of wood on the left, and on the right, a church erected on an eminence. The Prince did not stop here, but took up his quarters at a *cha-*

Digitized by Google

teau placed near the branching off of the cross-road leading to New-Troki.

Our corps had pleased itself with the hope, that it was destined for Wilna. Sadly was it disappointed, when on the morrow (July 4th) our advanced-guard took a direction towards New-Troki. Every one complained of the change in our route. They said that a fatality attached to our corps; that, harassed with fatigue, we were suddenly and unnecessarily prevented from entering a town where we had expected to repose ourselves after our long and tedious march. Our commanders endeavoured to console us for this disappointment, by assuring us that we should certainly visit Witepsk and Smolensko, two towns which would soon make us forget Wilna.

After four tedious hours, during which we had traversed nothing but forests and miry foot-paths, we arrived near New-Troki (July 4th), situated on an eminence, and surrounded by lakes. This delightful place formed a striking contrast with the road we had just quitted, and every one admired its fine situation, and the charming effect which was produced by a large convent on the summit of a mountain that overlooked the town. Others were struck with the wild appearance of the impenetrable forests, and the clearness of the waters, which are said never to freeze. They who had acquired any taste for the beauties of

Digitized by Google

nature, were never tired of admiring this romantic spot. In the middle of the lake was an old ruined castle, whose darkened walls projected on one side over the surface of the water, and on the other seemed to touch the gilded horizon.

Troki appeared at first a delightful spot, but the illusion ceased the moment we entered it. We had scarcely approached the first houses, when a crowd of Jews, followed by women, children, and old men with their beards reaching to their girdles, threw themselves at our feet, and implored us to deliver them from the rapacity of the soldiers, who plundered and destroyed every thing which fell into their power. We could grant them nothing but our pity. The town in which we were quartered had no magazines, and our soldiers, having been long deprived of their rations, subsisted now only on pillage. This caused the greatest confusion. And the fatal want of discipline which it produced was the more pernicious, as it is an infallible sign of the approaching ruin of an army.

The houses of the Russians at Troki had been all deprived of their furniture by the inhabitants, who had carried every thing away with them in their flight; and the houses of the Jews, which were disgustingly dirty, had been pillaged by the soldiers. Thus an abode which we had expected to find so agreeable was in the highest degree

Digitized by Google

unpleasant and uncomfortable. We had not even straw to sleep upon; and the forage for the horses was procured from a distance of nearly four leagues.

As it was probable that we should remain some days at Troki, the Emperor having halted at Wilna, the Viceroy went to him, and they had some long conferences together. Several officers also obtained leave to go there, and had an opportunity of witnessing the artifices to which Napoleon resorted to ensure his conquest. He excited the enthusiasm of the people by the most magnificent promises, and obtained from them the greatest sacrifices. The nobles also exerted themselves to the utmost of their power in promoting the views of the conqueror. By his means they hoped to ensure the independence of Poland; and to restore to their country the glory which she had possessed in the times of the Ladislas.

The sight of the Polish standards floating on the walls of the ancient capital of the Dukes of Lithuania, excited the enthusiasm of all the inhabitants, and recalled the most pleasing and brilliant recollections to the minds of those who cherished the memory of the ancient glory of their beloved country. Nothing, however, more forcibly reminded them of their former greatness

Digitized by Google

than to meet again on the borders of the Wilia, those warriors who had devoted the time of their exile to immortalize the Polish name on the banks of the Nile, the Tiber, the Tagus, and the Danube. The air was rent with joyful acclamations. Crowds every where followed their steps. All wished to see them, to engrave on their hearts the image of their brave compatriots, and all glowed with the noble desire of marching under the same banners.

Napoleon, having given audience to the whole body of the university, questioned the principal on the different branches of science which were taught in that celebrated institution. He afterwards reorganized the civil administration of the town, which had been completely subverted by the departure of the chief functionaries, and by the loss of all the books and registers that belonged to the archives of the place. After the example of France, he divided the invaded provinces into different districts, nominating inspectors, receivers, commissaries of police, and above all, intendants to facilitate the payment of his numberless requisitions. But he principally endeavoured to stimulate the Lithuanians to make levies en masse, for the formation of new corps. He offered arms to all the peasants who were inclined to revolt against their masters; and strove,

Digitized by Google

as at the commencement of our revolution, to excite a civil war between the people and the nobility.

These projects certainly caused some sensation in the city where the Emperor commanded; but, in the towns and the country, they produced nothing favourable to his designs. Napoleon, nevertheless, continued to invite the Lithuanians to assist him; and, to impose on them, he endeavoured to astonish the vulgar. He spoke with equal fluency, and at the same audience, of the public spectacles, and of religion, of war, and of the arts. He was seen on horseback at all hours of the day; and after having superintended the erection of some new bridge or fortification, he immediately entered his cabinet, and shewed himself perfectly master of the most complicated scheme of politics or finance; and finally, in the midst of the most grave and serious affairs he affected to occupy himself with the veriest trifles.

The commission which was formed for the general administration of all Lithuania, consisted, at first, of only five members: but Napoleon added to their number in proportion as his partisans increased. The day on which that commission was instituted, three proclamations were issued. The first, which was addressed

Digitized by Google

to the people, announced the installation of the provisional government of Lithuania, and enforced the gratitude which was due to him who had delivered Poland from the grasp of its oppressors. The next exhorted the clergy to second the zeal of the nation, and to obtain, by their fervent prayers, the favour of Almighty God. The third, the object of which was to recall the Lithuanians who were in the service of Russia, contained the following words:—

"POLANDERS,

"You are under Russian banners. It was "permitted you to serve that power while you "had no longer a country of your own. But "all is now changed. Poland is newly created. "You must combat for her complete re-esta- "blishment, and compel the Russians to ac- "knowledge those rights, of which you had been "despoiled by injustice and usurpation. The "general confederation of Poland and Lithuania, "recalls every Polander from the Russian ser- "vice. Generals of Poland, officers and soldiers! "listen to the voice of your country. Abandon "the standards of your oppressors. Hasten and "range yourselves under the eagle of the Jagel- "lons, the Cassimirs, and the Sobieskies! Your

Digitized by Google

" country requires it of you. Honour and reli-
" gion equally command it*."

The committee of the government established at Wilna, which lent itself to the views of Napoleon, merely to lighten those calamities which the horrors of the war had brought on the people, was indefatigably zealous in every thing which could promote the interest of the administration. The department of Wilna was already formed, and the conquered territory was divided into eleven sub-districts. But that organization, apparently advantageous, produced no kind of benefit. The country was pillaged, the villages deserted, and all the peasants fled into the woods. We saw only a few miserable Jews, covered with rags, who from a spirit of avarice chose rather to expose themselves to the insults of our soldiers, than abandon their infectious habitations. In short, to give some faint idea of the disorder which prevailed in the midst of this pretended organization, I shall only mention, that when the sub-prefect of New-Troki came from Wilna, to take possession of his government, he was stopped by our troops, and plundered of every thing. Even his own escort robbed him of his provisions and clothes; and at length he arrived on foot in a condition so wretched, that every one regarded as

* See Lithuanian Courier, July 7, 1812.

Digitized by Google

a spy the man who was destined to be our first administrator.

Thus the brilliant hopes with which the Polanders had at first flattered themselves, began to fade, when it was perceived, that our chief was actuated solely by the puerile ambition of placing a new crown on his head; and that while he was unable to consolidate any thing, he talked incessantly of conquering immense provinces, and of subjecting to the same laws and the same sceptre, countries which differed so widely in their customs and their climates. Blind to the want of discipline which prevailed in his army, he occasioned the ruin of the rich, and the despair of the poor; and reduced the Lithuanians to consider those as their greatest aggressors, who had promised to become their deliverers. He thus exposed us to the hatred of the people; and made us the first and the saddest victims of his tyranny.

While this happened at Wilna, Warsaw might have exhibited the sublimest spectacle, if she had not been under the baneful influence of a man who trifled with the fate of nations, and whose plans, never the offspring of mature reflection, were always frustrated when their execution required calmness and prudence. The unhappy Polanders, relying on his flattering promises, assembled in their capital (June 28), and formed

Digitized by Google

a diet. The committee digested an eloquent report, in which the orator stated the importance of the work which had been intrusted to their care. He reminded his auditors, in an energetic manner, that Poland, placed in the centre of Europe, had formerly been a distinguished empire, mistress of a country extensive and fertile, and equally celebrated for her valour and her refinements: that, for many centuries, she had with unwearied courage repulsed from her borders those barbarous tribes who attempted in vain to subjugate the civilized world: that the honour of filling their throne had ever been an object of universal desire; and that, if some little divisions had arisen among themselves, they had only obscured for a short time their own horizon, without carrying the tempest abroad. He enumerated at length all that their beloved country had suffered from the ambition of Russia, who had outraged a powerful nation by frequent dismemberments. He dwelt particularly on the last period when Poland was annihilated by a triple partition, and Warsaw heard, amidst the shouts of a ferocious conqueror, the lamentable cries of the inhabitants of Praga, given without mercy to the sword and to the flames. He shewed that Russia, continually trampling upon Poland, gradually approached nearer to Germany, and already aspired at her conquest;

Digitized by Google

and finally, he demonstrated that such a fatal superiority of power, must ultimately destroy the rights of every nation, and subject the whole world to its empire.

After this rapid exposition of facts, the speaker made a less animated, but not a less judicious, enumeration of the weighty reasons which ought to unite Poland to France. "Europe," said he, "requires some rest after twenty-five years of "violent agitation. Her system will remain in- "complete, nor will the reward of her struggles "and her blood be secure, as long as the regions "of the north are permitted to vomit forth those "hordes, to the true character of which it be- "comes us to be no longer blind. They are no "more those whom necessity alone forced to "quit their savage abodes, and to seek in other "lands the comforts which their own inhospi- "table climate denied. A blind instinct once "served them instead of the arts which civilize "or defend other countries. But now the re- "finements of polished nations are united to the "barbarism of former times. The Russian has "learned from the European all the arts of at- "tack and defence, and he has made them the "instruments of desolation and destruction. He "is in some respects the equal of the European, "and he may soon become his master. In "Russia, superstitious and submissive slaves

Digitized by Google

" unhesitatingly obey the orders of a govern-
" ment to which every outrage is familiar. For
" a century past they have been busily employed
" in undermining all those banks which have
" restrained a torrent that threatens destruction
" to the world. How often have they overflowed
" them, urged either by their own ambition, or
" invited by imprudent princes, to whom they
" brought slavery instead of assistance. Russia,
" in the course of fifty years, has twenty times
" overwhelmed the south of Europe with her
" arms. The empire of Constantinople is almost
" subverted, and her crescent shorn of half its
" splendour."

Animated by his subject, he thus continued :—
" Henceforth the children of the Piasts and the
" Jagellons, will be proud to bear a name which
" was the glory of their ancestors; a name at
" which they grew pale, whom fraud and injustice
" have for a short time made our masters. Let
" us not doubt that this country, once so rich in
" heroes, will recover all her wonted glory.
" She will produce new Sigismonds, and new
" Sobieskies. She will shine with more brilliant
" and purer lustre; and surrounding nations,
" compelled to do us justice, will acknowledge
" that nothing was wanting in Poland for the
" growth of every virtue, but the cultivation of

Digitized by Google

" the soil by the free and unfettered hands of her
" own children."

Then addressing the venerable old man * who, from his services and his virtues, presided at the assembly, he concluded with the following beautiful apostrophe:—" Nestor of the Polish pa-
" triots, when you left them, you carried with
" you the gods which had escaped the overthrow
" of your country. They return to it to-day to
" receive eternal adoration; and to dwell in it
" as in a temple, around which the whole nation,
" instructed by their misfortunes, and awakened
" to vigilance by the surprises from which they
" have suffered, will not cease to maintain a con-
" stant guard; which they will enrich with every
" virtue that has adorned the Polish character,
" and which they pledge themselves to defend at
" the hazard of their lives."

After this harangue the orator submitted another report to the diet, in which he explained the motives that had induced the committee to draw up the act of confederation; declaring that it was the wish of the nation to offer the crown to the King of Saxony; who too wise and virtuous to object, would condescend, they hoped, to accept it, and unite with Divine Providence in re-

* Prince Czartoryski, Grand Marshal at the Diet.

Digitized by Google

storing the arms of Lithuania to their escutcheon, and in spreading through the fertile countries of Wolhynia, and the extensive plains of Podolia and the Ukraine, the cheering sounds of, *Long live Poland! Long live our country!*

The committee then produced the act of confederation, the chief articles of which consisted, in uniting every part of ancient Poland, in the formation of the new kingdom; in recalling the Polanders from the Russian service: and lastly, in sending a deputation to the Emperor Napoleon, soliciting him to extend his powerful protection over the cradle of Polish liberty.

The deputation was admitted to Napoleon (July 14th) the night before his departure from Wilna. They submitted to him the act of confederation, of which we have just spoken. The conqueror gave them evasive promises. Perhaps he was offended that the noble Polish nation had not thrown itself at his feet to obtain the honour of becoming a part of the great empire. The liberty which they demanded appeared to disquiet and to surprise him. He feared that the assembly which he had convoked, and which seemed now so willing to second his views, might hereafter prove less submissive to his wishes. It is the peculiar character of tyrants to be suspicious even when they are doing good; to take umbrage at the objects of their own protection; and to be

Digitized by Google

alarmed at the independence of others, even if it has been their own work. Napoleon therefore made no decisive promises, but exacted, as preliminaries, enormous sacrifices, and a devotion to his interest, with which the Polanders could not comply without putting to the hazard their hopes of future happiness. He demanded that the provinces subjected to Russia should declare themselves against her, even before his arrival, and that Gallicia should form no part of the confederation, because he had guaranteed to Austria the integrity of her states.

If all these extensive projects had been conceived by a prudent head, more anxious for the welfare of mankind, than the gratification of its own ambition, there is no doubt that although gigantic they might have been realized. Napoleon had attained so high a degree of power, that it was not necessary for him to resort to war to accomplish any purpose. By a policy prudent, skilful, and above all conciliatory, he might have made more lasting, and even more extensive conquests, than he had gained by force of arms. Posterity will perceive that he was dazzled by too much prosperity, and employed incalculable means to accomplish his own downfal, while he might have succeeded to the utmost of his wishes, without hazarding or compromising any thing. An enemy to whatever required patience and re-

Digitized by Google

flection, he knew nothing but force: and Heaven permitted him to be crushed by that very power which had been his only law.

The brave Polanders, despairing for their country, considered all their plans as chimerical, when they perceived that Napoleon, more ambitious and less virtuous than Charles XII., aspired at the Polish crown, and only promised them his assistance, that he might profit by their resentment against Russia. Thus, that fortunate conqueror, restless even on the most splendid throne of Europe, seemed to prove by his inquietude that he felt himself unworthy of the exalted rank to which fortune had elevated him. Instead of establishing his power by the exercise of justice, and by that charm which the arts and sciences inspire; he wished to subvert the world, and to renew from north to south those atrocious wars of the middle age, when despots could only reign by exciting trouble and discord, and promising to their own subjects the spoils of their neighbours.

Digitized by Google

BOOK II.

WITEPSK.

WHILST Napoleon remained at Wilna, the Prince of Eckmuhl (Davoust) was despatched to Minsk, in pursuit of Prince Bagration, who endeavoured to effect a junction with the army of Barclay de Tolly. By that manœuvre we prevented the Russian Prince from marching on the Dwina, and forced him to proceed towards Mohilow, on the Dnieper, whither he was pursued by the first corps, and the cavalry of General Grouchy. All our other corps which formed the centre directed their course towards Dinabourg. With regard to the fourth corps, the two French divisions, and the royal guards took the road of of Paradomin in their march to Ochmiana; whilst the Viceroy, the division of Pino, and all the cavalry, marched to Rudniki.

This latter movement was rendered necessary in consequence of information which we had received that the Hetman Platow, at the head of four thousand cossacks, having been separated

Digitized by Google

from the corps of Bagration, was expected on the road of Lida, where he would endeavour to effect a junction with the Russian army which had evacuated Wilna. At this news the Viceroy put himself in motion, but the road to Rudniki was so bad, that the cavalry of the royal guard was obliged to pursue a different route. It is not possible to form an idea of the difficulties which presented themselves on that road, entirely formed of the trunks of fir-trees placed on the marshy ground. The horses in passing over these pieces of wood frequently trod between them, and falling in this situation, inevitably broke their legs. If, to avoid these difficulties, we turned to the right or left, we were in danger of sinking into morasses from which there was no possibility of escape.

The staff, after having lost some horses belonging to our escort, at last succeeded in extricating itself from this dangerous passage, and arrived at Rudniki in the middle of the night. The following morning (July 8th) we marched towards Jachounoui, where we regained the great road. Thence we proceeded to Mal-Solechniki. The Prince however would not stop there, but pursued his route to Bol-Solechniki, where he intended to remain during the night, and hoped to receive some tidings of the cossacks whom he had orders to pursue. The following day we

Digitized by Google

continued our march, and arrived at a castle not far distant from Soubotniki.

The Viceroy was obliged to halt here, for the bad roads having impeded the march of the thirteenth and fourteenth divisions, as well as the Italian corps, we had nothing but the light cavalry with us. The order which had been sent for hastening their progress, was by some mistake, returned to General Dessoles, the chief of our staff, so that these troops, having received no instructions, had retained their position, while we believed that they were following us. At length some intelligent officers were sent out in all directions, who succeeded, after a long search, in extricating the division of Pino from the marshes of Rudniki, and conducting the guard towards Ochmiana. The Viceroy in the meantime, after having searched in vain for the cossacks, returned and marched towards Jachounoui, where he joined the thirteenth and fourteenth divisions. On the following day (July 12), they all took the road towards Smorghoni, where they effected a junction with the rest of the troops who composed the fourth corps.

The town of Smorghoni is large and populous, yet all the houses, with the exception of two or three, are built of wood. A little river with a bridge thrown over it divides the castle from the town. The inhabitants consist chiefly of Jews,

Digitized by Google

who carry on considerable commerce. Though the town was melancholy enough, the halt we made in it was delightful to the whole army; for this simple reason, that it enabled us to procure a supply of bread and beer.

During the day that we reposed at Smorghoni, we erected a bridge over the Narotsch, that we might proceed in a direct line to Vileïka. But the work was scarcely finished when the orders were changed, and the majority of the troops marched to Zachkevitschi, where they remained that night.

(July 15th). The road from Zachkevitschi to Vileïka is very sandy, and lies through a thick forest. A little before we arrived there we crossed the Wilia over a floating bridge. The river at this place is neither very broad nor rapid, but its banks are extremely steep, particularly the one opposite Vileïka. On entering the town, General Colbert who commanded the advanced-guard took some magazines which had been abandoned; and as a short time only had elapsed since the enemy had quitted that position, the Viceroy redoubled his vigilance for fear of a surprise, and selected with the utmost care an advantageous situation for his troops to encamp.

Whilst we marched towards Vileïka, the King of Naples (Murat), assisted by the second and third corps, drove the first western army from

Digitized by Google

one position to another behind the Dwina, and at last forced them to retire into the intrenched camp of Drissa. On our right, Prince Eckmuhl (Davoust) continued the pursuit of Prince Bagration, and arrived without fighting as far as Borisow, on the Berezina. On our left the Marshal Duke of Tarentum likewise obtained important advantages, and took entire possession of Samogitia.

The conduct of the enemy in thus continually flying before us was accounted for in different ways. Some thought that it was the effect of weakness, others believed it to be the result of a well-digested plan. "What is become of those "Russians," asked the former, "who for more "than fifty years have been the terror of Europe, "and the conquerors of Asia? The power of "Russia seems to be merely fictitious, invented "by hireling writers and deceitful travellers. It "exists only in imagination, and the phantom "vanishes the moment we attack it." They however, whom experience had taught to wait the result of time, affirmed that it was unwise to despise an enemy whom we had not yet combatted; that his flight was calculated to diminish our force, and to deprive us of the means of recruiting it, by drawing us further from our resources. "The Russians," added these intelligent reasoners, "derive their most powerful

Digitized by Google

" succours from their climate. Why should they " seek to fight us when they know that the win- " ter will compel us to abandon all our con- " quests ?"

At last the Russians themselves explained the motives of their retreat, by the following proclamation distributed on the borders of the Dwina :—

" FRENCH SOLDIERS !

" You are forced to march to a new war. You " are told that it is because the Russians do not " render justice to your valour. No, comrades, " they truly appreciate it. You will see it on " the day of battle. Consider, that if it be ne- " cessary, army will succeed to army, and that " you are four hundred leagues from your re- " sources. Do not allow yourselves to be de- " ceived by our first movements. You know the " Russians too well to suppose that they fly before " you. In proper time they will accept the com- " bat, and you will find it difficult to retreat. " We advise you as fellow-soldiers to return in a " body to your native country. Do not believe " the perfidious suggestion that you are fighting " for peace. You shed your blood to gratify the " insatiable ambition of a sovereign who does not " wish for peace. He might have obtained it " long ago ; but he sports with the lives of his

Digitized by Google

" brave subjects. Return to your homes, or if " you wish it, seek an asylum in Russia; there " you will forget the names of conscription, levies, " *bans*, and *arrière-bans*, and that military ty- " ranny which does not allow you for one minute " to shake off the oppressive yoke."

This proclamation contained such palpable truths that its publication astonished every one. Some indeed regarded it as a forgery, and thought that it was written to prepare the way for that despicable *answer of a French grenadier*, which would certainly have become a subject of pleasantry to the army, and of contempt to foreigners, if we had not long known that an implicit obedience to his chief is the first duty of a soldier: and that every Frenchman, faithful to his banners, esteemed it a point of honour strenuously to combat all those whom his commanders should represent as the enemies of his country.

Continuing our march we arrived at Kostenevitschi, a miserable little village where, excepting the post-house and vicarage, there were only a few wretched barns covered with thatch. The royal guard encamped round the village, but the Viceroy established his head-quarters two leagues further on.

The following day (July 17th), after a march of five leagues over a tolerably good road, we

Digitized by Google

reached the town of Dolghinow, the inhabitants of which consisted almost entirely of Jews, a circumstance by which we were enabled to procure a few bottles of brandy. Our incessant marches, and the long period during which we had been deprived of that liquor, induce me to mention a circumstance apparently so insignificant; but from the importance which we then attached to it, the reader may judge of the extent of our wants, and the difficulty of supplying them.

We proceeded thence to Dokzice, a distance of about seven leagues. That town, the inhabitants of which were likewise Jews, contained a handsome square, near which stood a church, and a wretched *chateau* built of wood. The extremities of the town are situated on two eminences, between which runs a little marshy rivulet. On the day that we halted here we suddenly perceived a thick smoke rising behind the *chateau* in which the Prince was quartered. The flames soon spread on every side, and consumed in an instant several neighbouring houses; but the soldiers rendering the most timely and efficacious assistance, the fire was quickly subdued, and all our apprehensions vanished.

Near Smorghoni we had left the road to Minsk and the Dnieper, and had turned to the left, to approach the Dwina, and to follow the movements

Digitized by Google

of the centre of the grand army, which had taken that direction. General Sebastiani, who commanded the advanced-guard, assisted by the corps of the Duke of Reggio (Oudinot), repulsed the cossacks as far as Drouïa; but the enemy, which was shut up in the intrenched camp at Drissa, having been informed that our cavalry was badly guarded, threw a bridge over the river, and detached five thousand infantry and as many cavalry, commanded by General Koulniew. An engagement soon commenced, and General Saintgeniez being taken by surprise was made prisoner, while the rest of the brigade did not escape without considerable loss.

As we approached Berezina, where we intended to encamp that night, the road, gradually descending, brought us unawares to the river of the same name, which runs through one of the most marshy plains in Europe. We were convinced of this when we arrived at the town, the houses of which extended in a long line over an absolute morass. Beyond Berezina the road is continued over a kind of turf, on which were placed a quantity of fir branches to give some firmness to a mere bog. A few intervals were left for the waters to drain off.

From the Berezina, as far as the Oula, the country was wet and marshy. The road from one river to the other forms a line of twenty or twenty-

Digitized by Google

five leagues, passing continually through marshes and immense forests. Gloubokoé was our first station, and Kamen the second. The first of these towns is remarkable for a beautiful castle of wood; and the latter, for a kind of mountain in the very centre of the place, which overlooks the plain.

At Botscheïkovo we approached the borders of the Oula (July 23d). This river is united to the Berezina by the canal of Lepel, which gives facility to the commerce of all the neighbouring provinces. This canal is yet more important, as it forms a communication between the Dnieper and the Dwina; and thus uniting the Baltic and the Mediterranean, it enlivens the interior of Lithuania, and enriches her with the productions of the most distant climes, while it facilitates the exportation of the produce of her own soil. The banks of this river are very high and steep. On the left side beyond the bridge appears a magnificent *chateau*, which we thought the most beautiful that we had since our arrival in Poland.

We could not however restrain our astonishment at the rapidity with which we were allowed to proceed in our march without opposition. The Russians conducted themselves towards us as the Parthians had done with respect to the Romans. Unable to contend against the conquerors of the

Digitized by Google

world, they allured us into the very heart of their country, burning and destroying every thing that could be useful to us, that they might deliver us up at length to the horrors of famine, and to all the severity of their rigorous climate. Thus we advanced daily without any impediment, and with almost as much security as when we traversed Bavaria and Saxony. The tranquillity in which our adversaries permitted us to continue, was incomprehensible, and every one formed the most opposite, and frequently the most erroneous, conjectures. At Kamen, however, we learned from several officers who had been sent to Ouchatsch, where the Emperor was, that the enemy, having quitted their trenches at Drissa, had ascended the Dwina towards Polotsk and Witepsk, through fear of being cut off by our corps, which had taken a direction towards the latter town. The orders which they brought us, made us likewise believe that we should soon meet with considerable resistance. These conjectures were presently changed into certainty, when, on reconnoitring the mouth of the Oula and the road to Bézenkovitschi, we discovered that the cossacks hovered on our flanks. The Viceroy immediately ordered the advanced-guard and the light cavalry, to proceed to Bézenkovitschi, where the Russians were assembled in much force, under General Ostermann (July 23d).

Digitized by Google

The prince soon afterwards mounted his horse, accompanied by his aide-de-camps, and followed the movements of the advanced-guard. When he arrived at Bézenkovitschi, the enemy retreated, and crossed the Dwina with his cavalry and some pieces of artillery. While we were in that town, the Russian sharp-shooters, who were concealed in the houses of the village on the opposite side of the river, kept up an incessant fire upon us. Colonel la Croix, who was passing down the principal street leading to the river, received a shot which broke his thigh. This accident produced a painful sensation through the whole army. Every one pitied this worthy officer, and lamented that we were deprived of his valuable services, by a fatality which frequently takes from the most deserving all power to distinguish themselves. After having reconnoitred the position of the enemy, the Viceroy returned for the night to the castle of Botscheïkovo. In the evening he had a long conference with General Dessoles, the chief of his staff, which made us presume that we should march in the night; but the order was not given till the following morning.

(July 24). After five hours' march, and crossing a small river called Svetscha, our troops arrived at Bézenkovitschi. This little town was already filled with troops, particularly with the two divisions of cavalry under Generals Bruy-

Digitized by Google

ères and Saint Germain, who had come by the way of Oula. This great mass of troops marching towards Witepsk terrified not the enemy, who was separated from us by the Dwina. His cavalry proudly manœuvred, and fired on our soldiers when they approached to seize the ferry-boat which had been carried to the opposite shore.

The Viceroy however having resolved to cross the Dwina at this point, caused a battery of two pieces of cannon to be erected, to protect the sappers who had been ordered to construct a bridge, and the marines of the royal guard, who, plunging in the water, attempted to reach the boat. These guns, and a few sharp-shooters placed on the shore, soon intimidated the Russians so much, that they quitted the houses in which they had concealed themselves, and allowed us quietly to take back the boat, and to complete the bridge.

In the meantime a division of Bavarian cavalry, under General Preyssing, having discovered a ford about two hundred paces below the bridge, effected their passage. Scarcely had they crossed the river, when they ranged themselves in order of battle, supported by some companies of light troops which had been sent over in the boat. In an instant they advanced to charge the enemy, who fled at their approach, setting fire to every thing which he was compelled to leave behind. We

Digitized by Google

particularly admired on that occasion, the manner in which the Bavarians advanced. The precision of their evolutions, and the skill with which they disposed their outposts, may be quoted as models for those who have to execute similar manœuvres.

While we were contemplating these operations, it was reported that the Emperor was approaching. The courier who had brought the news was quickly followed by another who confirmed it. Soon afterwards arrived the saddle-horses, the officers of ordnance, and the generals of the guard; in short the town, already full of troops, presently became absolutely crowded. In the midst of this tumult Napoleon appeared. He proceeded immediately to that part of the river at which they were erecting the bridge. In a dry and sarcastic manner he blamed its construction, but having determined to proceed to the other side, he crossed the bridge, and mounting his horse, joined the Bavarians who had halted on the plain. Then marching with them, he advanced nearly two leagues from Bézenkovitschi. Napoleon, doubtless, executed that manœuvre with the view of attracting the enemy's attention to this point, that he might find less opposition when he attacked Witepsk on the opposite bank. He likewise hoped to annoy the Russian army in its retreat, which was now ascending the Dwina,

Digitized by Google

after having abandoned the intrenched camp at Drissa.

It it impossible to imagine the confusion which reigned in Bézenkovitschi, and which increased on the arrival of the staff. In the night the tumult became still more dreadful. The crowd of troops which flowed in from all parts, and the quickness with which they were ordered to proceed, left no doubt that we were on the eve of a battle. The cavalry, commanded by the King of Naples (Murat), formed the van-guard, and the division of Delzons followed immediately to support them.

(July 25th). Orders were given to march to Ostrowno; and the staff was on the point of setting out, when we heard a strong cannonade. At this moment an aide-de-camp of General Delzons arrived in great haste to inform the Viceroy (Eugene Beauharnois) that the enemy had been overtaken near Ostrowno, and that a vigorous engagement had just commenced. The aide-de-camp had scarcely finished his report, when the noise of the cannon was redoubled. His highness immediately commanded the baggage of the head-quarters to halt: and, accompanied only by his staff, hastened to Ostrowno, where he joined the King of Naples, who had with him the divisions of cavalry of Bruyères, and Saint-Germain, supported by the thirteenth division of infantry. When they arrived at Soritza, the affair had

Digitized by Google

already been successfully decided. Twenty pieces of cannon which had fallen into our power, and the vast numbers of dead that were left on the field of battle, proved both the resistance of the conquered, and the valour of the seventh and eighth hussars, who had on that occasion covered themselves with glory.

It was three o'clock in the morning (July 26th) when the Viceroy arrived at Ostrowno, with the King of Naples. The fourth corps was encamped near him, and the cavalry, placed in front, watched the manœuvres of the enemy. At six o'clock his Majesty and the Prince, accompanied by their respective staffs, marched towards the out-posts, and passing over the ground where the engagement had taken place the night before, they heard that Ostermann's corps, consisting of two divisions, was drawn up in order of battle. The prince immediately ordered the thirteenth and fourteenth divisions to support the cavalry commanded by the King of Naples. The hussars, who were sent out to reconnoitre, having met with much opposition at the entrance of a forest, returned with the intelligence that the enemy seemed determined to dispute our passage. We heard on all sides the fire of the sharp-shooters; and the cannon of the Russians, placed on the road, enfiladed the columns which had advanced. General Danthouard ordered our artillery to be

Digitized by Google

brought forward without delay, and it was in this exchange of balls, that Captain Ferrari, of the eighth hussars, formerly aide-de-camp to the Prince of Neufchatel, had his leg shot off. Meanwhile, the king of Naples, hastening wherever his presence could be useful, ordered an attack to be made from our left, to disperse the enemy's cavalry which occupied the extremity of a wood. But, notwithstanding this manœuvre was well-planned, it had not the desired effect. The detachment of hussars intrusted with the execution of it was too weak, and was soon compelled, though without loss, to retreat before the numerous squadrons which rushed on to the charge.

While we were thus manœuvring on our left, the Russians attempted to force our right. The Viceroy perceiving it, caused the thirteenth division to proceed towards that point; who advancing rapidly on the road, stopped the progress of the enemy; while the artillery of our regiments, being advantageously placed on some eminences, made us feel certain that our line could not be forced.

Our right was scarcely secure, when a sudden attack was made, and dreadful cries were heard, both on the left and in the centre. The enemy advancing in great force, had vigorously pushed back our sharp-shooters placed in the forest, and compelled the artillery to retire precipitately;

Digitized by Google

while the Russian cavalry, profiting by a little plain on our left, furiously charged the Croats, and the 84th regiment. Happily, however, the King of Naples came up in time to check their progress. Two battalions of the 106th, which had been kept in reserve, supported the Croats; while General Danthouard, in whom were united the most brilliant talents and undaunted bravery, seconded by Colonel Demay and Captain Bonardelle, reanimated the courage of the artillery, and by skilful evolutions replaced them in the position which they had quitted but for a moment.

The affairs of the left and of the centre being re-established, the King of Naples and Prince Eugene proceeded to the right wing, and put it in motion. The enemy, lying in ambuscade before a forest, opposed a vigorous resistance to the 92d regiment, which, notwithstanding its being placed on an advantageous eminence, remained inactive. The Viceroy instantly despatched the adjutant-commandant Forestier to urge them forward. With some difficulty, he succeeded in making them advance: but their march appearing too slow to the impetuous valour of the Duke of Abrantes (Junot), that intrepid general, who in other campaigns had acted as commander-in-chief, hastily quitted the Viceroy, and put himself at the head of this regiment, on which every eye was now now fixed. His presence, or rather his

Digitized by Google

example, electrified every heart; and the brave 92d, led on by General Roussel, rushed instantly to the charge, overthrew every thing that opposed it, and penetrated at last into the forest, the entrance to which was most obstinately defended.

On looking to the extremity of our right, we perceived a Russian column, which had been sent to turn our flanks, commencing its retreat. The King of Naples ordered the cavalry to charge upon that column, and to compel it to lay down its arms. The difficulties of the ground made the soldiers hesitate for a moment; but the King, perceiving at a glance that the execution must be as prompt as the thought itself, set spurs to his horse, and eagerly exclaimed, "*Let the bravest* "*follow me.*" This trait of heroism filled us with admiration. All pressed forward to second him; but deep ravines and impenetrable thickets, impeded our progress, and gave the enemy time to escape, and to rejoin the corps from which they had been detached.

The success of the combat was certain; but we dared not venture to cross the extensive forest before us, on the other side of which were the hills of Witepsk, where we knew the whole Russian forces were encamped. While we were deliberating on the means of effecting that important passage, we heard a great tumult behind us. No one could guess the cause, and uneasi-

Digitized by Google

ness was added to our curiosity; but when we perceived Napoleon surrounded by a brilliant suite, our fears were dissipated; and the enthusiasm which his presence always excited, made us hope that he would add to the glory of that eventful day. The King of Naples and the Prince hastened to meet him, and informed him of the event of the engagement, and the measures which they had since adopted. But Napoleon, desirous to become more intimately acquainted with every circumstance, quickly proceeded to the most advanced posts of our line, and ascending an eminence, attentively viewed the position of the enemy, and the nature of the ground. His eye penetrated into the Russian camp. He guessed their plans, and immediately ordered new dispositions, which being excecuted with precision and rapidity, the army was soon in the middle of the forest. We followed at a quick pace, and reached the hills of Witepsk as the day began to close.

The thirteenth division, which assisted in this manœuvre, experienced much resistance from the enemy in crossing the woods. The Russians retired slowly, and disputed every step; while their numerous sharp-shooters made us pay dearly for the ground which we had gained. It was in one of these unfortunate rencontres, that a Russian dragoon of the enemy, coming up to Ge-

Digitized by Google

neral Roussel, fired at him with a pistol, and killed him on the spot. As the Russians seldom place dragoons among their sharp-shooters, it occasioned the report that General Roussel had been murdered by one of our own men; but we were afterwards assured that we had not to reproach ourselves with the death of that brave general, who was truly worthy of our regret, both on account of his military qualities, and his private virtues.

Broussier's division (the fourteenth) followed the great road, and arrived very late at the position which had been appointed for it between the road and the Dwina. The fifteenth division, and the Italian guard, forming the rest of the infantry of the fourth corps, were left in reserve a little behind the fourteenth.

The engagement being concluded, Napoleon established his head-quarters in the village of Koukoviatschi. The King of Naples and Prince Eugene were encamped in an uncomfortable little *chateau* near the village of Dobrijka, surrounded by the corps under their command.

On the following morning, at the dawn of day (July 27th), our troops marched towards Witepsk. The Russians, retiring on that town, fired some cannon, which did us little injury. They afterwards occupied a large plain near the town, commanding the only roads by which we could

Digitized by Google

approach. We could easily observe the lines of the enemy from the hill on which we were placed, and particularly his numerous cavalry, arranged in order of battle at the extremity of the plain.

The division of Broussier, constituting the advanced-guard, crossed the rivulet which separated us from the plain, and drew up on an height opposite the eminence occupied by the Russians. The sixteenth regiment of chasseurs, having descended the hill, was vigorously charged by several squadrons of the cossack-guard, and would have experienced a total defeat, if it had not been disengaged from the enemy by the light troops of the ninth regiment commanded by Captains Guyard and Savary. These soldiers attracted, on this occasion, the attention of the whole army, which, encamped on the surrounding heights as on an amphitheatre, witnessed their exploits, and rendered them the applause that was justly due to their valour. Napoleon, who had observed the action, sent immediately to inquire, to what corps they belonged. "To "the 9th regiment," it was replied, "and three-"fourths of them are Parisians." "Tell them," added the Emperor, "that they are brave fel-"lows, and that they all deserve the cross."

The sixteenth chasseurs, retiring upon the fourteenth division, were protected by the 53d regiment, commanded by Colonel Grosbon. That

Digitized by Google

division forming a square, presented to the enemy an impenetrable front, and all their repeated and furious attempts to break it proved ineffectual. This slight reverse threw a little confusion into our ranks; but Napoleon being at hand, it could not continue. Placed on an eminence, whence he could see all the manœuvres, he calmly made every disposition which he thought was necessary to secure the victory. He ordered a regiment of cavalry to retire, and open the passage of the bridge to the thirteenth division. This retrograde movement spread terror amongst our train, which was composed of workmen, sutlers, and victuallers, a class of people who are easily alarmed, and who, always afraid of losing their booty, are rather prejudicial than useful to an army.

The thirteenth division filed to the right as it advanced. The Viceroy marched at its head, and conducted it behind the fourteenth, to an eminence overlooking the plain on which the enemy was encamped.

These heights not being guarded, we proceeded without difficulty, and took our position on the summit opposite the Russian camp, separated from it by the river Loutchesa alone, but whose abrupt and steep banks formed a ravine so deep, that it was impossible to come to a general action. We feigned, however, to commence the engagement by detaching some light troops, who suc-

Digitized by Google

ceeded in passing over the ravine, and established themselves in a little wood. But not being supported, they proceeded no further, and returned to their corps as soon as the fire of the batteries had ceased, and the divisions were no longer under arms.

This suspension, when the armies were in sight of each other, excited universal astonishment; and every one inquired, "Where is the Emperor? "What are his intentions?"

During these discussions we were joined by the first corps, and the imperial guard. Some thought that Napoleon waited for the junction of all his forces before he began a serious attack; others affirmed that Marshal Ney, and the cavalry of General Montbrun, advancing from the other side of the Dwina, would turn the position at Witepsk, and thus cut off the retreat of the Russians. But this manœuvre was doubtless impracticable, since it was not executed.

On that night the troops bivouacked on the places where they had taken their positions, and the soldiers of the different corps, mingling together, related to each other the share which their respective divisions had borne in the honour of the day. From these accounts it appeared, that the combat, though glorious, had not been bloody. Amongst the small number who were killed was the ingenious Colonel Liedot, a man

Digitized by Google

truly worthy of the corps to which he belonged. During the expedition to Egypt, he distinguished himself by his courage; and in the construction of some fortifications in Italy, he proved that the military art is no obstacle to the developement of the most profound conceptions.

The boldness with which the Russians retained their positions, and the junction of a great part of our troops at the same point, induced us to believe that a general action would take place on the following day. What was therefore our astonishment when we perceived at the dawn of day (July 28th) that the enemy had effected his retreat! Our whole army went immediately in pursuit, except the imperial guard which was established at Witepsk, where the Emperor seemed inclined to remain. This town was nearly deserted; a few Jews, and some of the lower classes of society, alone remained. Some cossacks were seen on the other side of the road, who were immediately pursued by General Lefebre, commanding the light cavalry of the guard.

Witepsk is the capital of the government of that name, and is situated on a plain between some rising ground and the shores of the Dwina. It contained twenty thousand inhabitants, and presented, from the beauty of its situation, a most delightful aspect. Poland and Lithuania had, during more than two months, and through

Digitized by Google

a space of more than three hundred leagues, offered nothing to our view but deserted villages, and a ravaged country. Destruction seemed to precede our steps, and in every direction the whole population was seen flying at our approach, and leaving their habitations to hordes of cossacks, who destroyed every thing which they could not carry away. Having long experienced the most painful deprivations, we regarded with envious eyes those well-built and elegant houses where peace and abundance seemed to dwell. But that repose which we had so eagerly anticipated was again denied us, and we were compelled to renew our pursuit of the Russians, leaving on our left this town, the object of our most ardent wishes, and our dearest hopes. . . .

As we followed the movement of the advanced-guard, we were astonished at perceiving the perfect order with which Count Barclay de Tolly had evacuated his position. We wandered in all directions over an immense plain without perceiving the faintest trace of his retreat. Not one carriage, not a single dead horse, not even a solitary vehicle, indicated the road that the enemy had taken. While we remained in this uncertainty, which perhaps was without a parallel, Colonel Klisti, scouring the neighbouring country to endeavour to find some peasant, discovered a Russian soldier sleeping under a bush. This

Digitized by Google

rencontre was extremely fortunate, and the Viceroy, profiting by it, questioned the prisoner, who gave us some information as to the route that the column to which he belonged had taken.

The Prince, doubting the accuracy of the intelligence, advanced to reconnoitre, but not having met with any thing worthy of attention, we returned at full speed towards the high road which leads from Witepsk to the source of the Dwina. The whole road was covered with cavalry. The King of Naples soon joined the Viceroy, and after some consultation they ordered their respective corps to proceed. The heat was excessive, and the clouds of dust raised by the horses rendered our march insupportably fatiguing. We were soon obliged to stop, and halted at a church built of wood, where the King of Naples and the Prince had a long conference.

The cavalry had been ordered to continue their march, and we soon heard that they had overtaken the Russian army. The rest of the troops immediately followed, and speedily came in sight of and overtook the enemy. The cossacks, who formed the rear-guard, retreated on the advance of our artillery, and only halted to fire a few cannon-shot, whenever they found a favourable opportunity. They continued manœuvring till they were beyond Aghaponovchtchina, where our corps and the cavalry were encamped. Near this

Digitized by Google

village, on an eminence towards the left, was a wretched *chateau* built of wood, where the Emperor (who, being informed that we had overtaken the Russians, immediately left Witepsk to join us) established his quarters.

Never did a bivouac present a more military appearance than ours at Aghaponovchtchina. Napoleon, the King of Naples, and the Prince, were in one tent. The generals, placed in miserable huts which their soldiers had hastily constructed, were encamped with their officers by the side of a rivulet, the miry water of which was preserved with the greatest care. During the three days that we had been on the field of battle, water and roots had constituted our only nourishment. But victory inspired us with spirits and with strength, and rendered us insensible to every privation. Our divisions were encamped on the eminences which surrounded the *chateau*, and the enemy could see our numerous fires, the brilliant light of which dissipated the obscurity of the night.

Early on the following morning (July 29th) we again proceeded in search of the Russians; but the Emperor returned to Witepsk, where he proposed to remain a sufficient time to execute his plans relative to Lithuania. When the King of Naples arrived at the separation of the roads of Janowitschi and Sourai, he left us, taking with

Digitized by Google

him the whole heavy cavalry, and the fourteenth division. The Viceroy continued his march towards the Dwina, followed by the thirteenth and fifteenth divisions, the royal guard, and the brigade of light cavalry commanded by General Villasa.

We were on the point of entering Sourai when we were informed by some chasseurs that an enemy's convoy feebly escorted was endeavouring to pass the river to arrive at the road to Weliki-luki. The Viceroy immediately ordered his aide-de-camp Deseve to follow the chasseurs, and seize on the convoy. This order was fully executed: for, after two hours, the aide-de-camp returned with the intelligence that the convoy was ours.

The town of Sourai, although entirely built of wood, was the best that we had seen. Its population, consisting chiefly of Jews, was considerable, and their industry procured us many comforts of which we stood in the greatest need. The magazines were tolerably filled, which was a truly fortunate circumstance, as every thing seemed to indicate that we should make some stay in this little town.

Sourai, without being a military position, was a very important place. It is situated at the junction of the Casplia with the Dwina, and at the point where the high roads to Petersburgh

Digitized by Google

and Moscow divide. These form two *têtes-de-pont*, which perfectly command the road to Witepsk. During our stay here several geographical engineers arrived, and executed some plans of the river, and the surrounding country.

The thirteenth division, which had followed us, was encamped about a league behind Sourai; a part of the fifteenth, and the foot-guard, were quartered in the town. The horse-guard, commanded by General Triaire, proceeded to the other side of the Dwina, and sent off a strong detachment on the road to Weliki-luki. During that march, the adjutant of the palace, Boutarel, discovered that the road, as far as Ousviat, formed a continued defile across the woods. In the immediate vicinity of that small town the country was totally different, and the provisions which the dragoons brought from their expedition proved that this neighbourhood offered abundant resources for the cantonment of the troops.

On our arrival at Sourai, the Viceroy being informed that another Russian convoy with a strong escort had taken the road towards Veliz, ordered Baron Banco, colonel of the second regiment of Italian chasseurs, to take with him two hundred chosen men, and proceed immediately in pursuit. After nine hours' march, this detachment arrived at Veliz just as the convoy was issuing from the town, and crossing the bridge over

Digitized by Google

the Dwina. The chasseurs instantly charged the escort. Five times they were repulsed by the infantry, and by numerous detachments of cavalry much stronger than their own. But the bravery of the Italians triumphed at length over the obstinate resistance of the enemy, and they succeeded in taking all the baggage, and compelling five hundred Russians to lay down their arms. This victory cost us some wounded men; among these were six officers, one of whom died of his wounds.

While Napoleon was at Witepsk, endeavouring to organize Lithuania, and the centre of the army was inactive between the Nieper and the Dwina, we learned that the Prince of Eckmuhl (Davoust) had been been attacked at Mohilow. Bagration, profiting by the leisure which the combat at Borisow had allowed him, crossed the Berezina at Bobruisk, and marched towards Novoi-Bickow. On the 23d July, three hundred cossacks attacked us at the dawn of day, and took about a hundred prisoners from the third chasseurs, among whom was the colonel*. An alarm was spread in our camp. The drum was beat, and our soldiers flew to arms. The Russian General Sicverse, with two chosen divisions, directed all the attacks.

* 10th Bulletin.

Digitized by Google

From eight in the morning until five in the evening the firing continued on the skirts of the forest and on the bridge, which the Russians wished to force. At five o'clock the Prince of Eckmuhl caused three chosen battalions to advance. He placed himself at their head, overthrew the Russians, forced their position, and pursued them more than a league. The loss must have been equal on both sides, but Prince Bagration, satisfied with the *reconnaisance* which he had made, retired on Bickow, where he crossed the Dnieper and proceeded to Smolensko, at which place the two Russian armies were to form a junction.

General Kamenski endeavoured to join Prince Bagration with two divisions, but being unable to effect a junction, he returned to Wolhynia, and united himself to the corps which General Tormasow then commanded. These troops forming a considerable army, marched towards Kobrin, were reinforced by the seventh corps, and surrounded the Saxon General Klengel, who had with him only two regiments of infantry, and two squadrons of cavalry. Obliged to yield to superior force, he did not surrender till after an obstinate combat, hoping that he might be reinforced by General Regnier; but that officer, though he advanced as rapidly as possible,

Digitized by Google

did not not arrive till the capitulation had been signed*.

Notwithstanding we sustained these losses on our right, the successes on our left wing more than counterbalanced them. The Duke of Tarentum, commanding the Prussian corps, pushed forward several strong detachments on the road to Riga, and by the skilful dispositions of Generals Grawert and Kleist, gained very signal advantages over the Russians. A few days afterwards, General Ricard took Dunabourg, which the enemy had abandoned after having made great preparations for its defence.

The enterprise most glorious to our arms was performed by the second corps. The Duke of Reggio (Oudinot) having pushed forward his advanced-guard towards Sebei, met Prince Wittgenstein, who, reinforced by the corps of Prince Repnin, furiously attacked him. The engagement took place near the castle Jakoubovo. The division of Legrand sustained a severe engagement till ten o'clock at night, when by the valour of the 26th light infantry, and the 56th of the line, the Russians were repulsed with considerable loss. Notwithstanding this, they ventured on the morrow to attempt the passage of the Dwina.

* 11th Bulletin.

Digitized by Google

The Duke of Reggio ordered General Castex not to oppose them. The enemy fell into the snare, and on the 1st of August, advancing towards Drissa, drew up in order of battle facing the second corps. Fifteen thousand men, forming half of Wittgenstein's army, had crossed the river, when a masked battery of forty pieces of cannon opened upon them, and kept up a constant and destructive fire for half an hour. At the same moment, the division of Legrand advanced to the attack, and the enemy beginning to fall into confusion, the division of Verdier made a furious and irresistible charge with fixed bayonets. The Russians were driven into the river. Three thousand men, and fourteen pieces of cannon, remained in our power. Pursuing their scattered troops on the road to Sebei, we counted two thousand dead, among whom was General Koulniew, a very distinguished officer of the light troops.

During his stay at Witepsk, the Emperor caused several houses in front of the palace * to be demolished, to form a grand parade, on which he might review his troops. Having assembled the foot-grenadiers of the guard, he ordered them to

* This palace was formerly inhabited by the Duke of Wurtemberg, Governor of Witepsk, who here held a very brilliant court.

Digitized by Google

acknowledge General Friant as their colonel:—Never was nomination received with more universal rapture. The flattering and gracious expressions with which Napoleon accompanied this recompence, were only surpassed by the shouts of enthusiastic joy with which the grenadiers unanimously hailed the appointment. They recognized in this preferment a proof of the esteem in which their corps was held, since they principally consisted of the brave fellows who had fought in Italy, in Egypt, and in Germany, under the eyes of him who was now become their chief. But though General Friant was fully sensible of the honour conferred upon him, he solicited and obtained permission to retain the command of the second division, which he had formed himself, and which since the opening of the campaign had always constituted the advanced-guard.

At that time a rumour was spread that the Emperor Alexander had been assassinated at Velikiluki by his courtiers, who were indignant at his offering to treat with us. It was asserted that Napoleon had exultingly announced this as a positive fact at one of his audiences at Witepsk. We afterwards ascertained that this false report had been circulated to counteract the effect of the energetic proclamation which the Emperor Alexander had issued to the Russian people, in which he had commanded every inhabitant of his

Digitized by Google

immense empire to take arms against a perfidious enemy, who, after having violated the boundaries of their country, was advancing to destroy their ancient capital, and to annihilate the glory of its illustrious founders. All these infamous falsehoods completely failed of success. They did not even reach a population, which, flying at the approach of the French army, could neither experience the effects of an artifice so mean, nor be corrupted by our flattering promises. In truth, the object of every promise made by our deceitful chief was to delude and to betray; it was to kindle the most frightful discord, by exciting the people against the nobility, and stifling in their hearts that faithful attachment which was due to their lawful sovereign.

Digitized by Google

BOOK III.

SMOLENSKO.

After the battle of Veliz, the Viceroy feeling the necessity of strengthening the detachment of chasseurs that had been left there, reinforced them with the whole brigade of General Villata and with one battalion of Dalmatians. Veliz, situated at the junction of two principal roads from Petersburg and Smolensko, was exposed to the frequent attacks of the cossacks; it was also the extreme point to which the French army had penetrated. The population of this small town consisted entirely of Jews, and procured us little more than the absolute necessaries of life. The environs contained only a few miserable hovels. While the soldiers gave themselves up to the indulgencies which such circumstances could afford, Colonel Banco, who perfectly understood the Russian language, was informed by some spies that the enemy intended to attack the brigade. On receiving this intelligence, General Villata secretly made every proper disposition to repel the enemy,

Digitized by Google

while he publicly affected to think himself in complete security. At daybreak the cossacks suddenly appeared before the town, hoping to find the garrison buried in sleep; but the Dalmatians issuing from their ambuscade, fired a well-directed volley on them, which did considerable execution. The enemy, terrified by this unexpected reception, immediately took to flight, and abandoned the hope of surprising a town so bravely defended. The soldiers shewed themselves, on this occasion, worthy of the rewards which their former valour had procured for them.

The heat was now so oppressive that Napoleon, in spite of his impatience to attack the enemy, was compelled to allow his army some repose. They who had witnessed the campaign of Egypt assured us that the sun of that country was not more scorching than we now found it in Russia. The troops whose bivouacs were far from the rivers, suffered cruelly. The soldiers eagerly dug up the ground with their bayonets, to find some water, and if they were fortunate enough to meet with any, it was so muddy that they were unable to drink it till they had strained it through their handkerchiefs.

The fourth corps, after resting ten days in the town of Sourai, marched on the 9th of August towards Janowitschi to join the fourteenth divi-

Digitized by Google

sion. On the evening before this movement took place, Colonel Labedoyere, aide-de-camp to Prince Eugene, was sent to the King of Naples. At his return from his mission, he confirmed the news of a desperate engagement having taken place between the enemy and our troops under General Sebastiani, near Inkovo, in which we had been defeated with considerable loss*. The reports of the different officers agreed that our cavalry had severely suffered, and that, besides several pieces of cannon, a fine light company of the 24th infantry had been captured. It was likewise said, that had it not been for the bravery of the Prussian lancers, our losses would have been infinitely greater. Some blamed General Sebastiani, but the greater part attributed the fault to General Montbrun, who, disregarding the information he had received, and urged on by his natural bravery, had hazarded a battle against a much superior force of the enemy.

The Viceroy having halted on the 10th of August at Janowitschi, the pioneers of the fourth corps, under the direction of General Poitevin, endeavoured to repair the bridge over the little river that passes through the town; but it was so completely out of condition, that they were obliged to abandon it, and the baggage and

* 13th Bulletin.

Digitized by Google

cavalry passed the river at a ford, where the bottom was very muddy, and the banks exceedingly steep.

On our march towards Liozna, we crossed a plain gently undulated with little hillocks. We afterwards passed several small woods, and a rivulet that runs near a hamlet situated about half-way to the castle of Velechkovitschi, where the army arrived on the 11th of August, and the soldiers encamped on the heights which surround the *chateau*. The rain which had fallen abundantly two days before had made the roads, as far as Liozna, dreadfully miry; which passing through wet and marshy meadows, presented almost insuperable obstacles to our convoys, and particularly to our artillery. I should remark, that these were the only violent storms which we experienced; and that during the rest of the campaign, we were very little incommoded by rain.

Near Liozna, a large and dirty village, we crossed (August the 12th) a wretched bridge thrown over a deep and winding river, which separates the town from the *chateau*, three quarters of a mile distant towards the west, where Prince Eugene had established his quarters. A communication was soon established by means of another bridge. Our troops availed themselves of the camp that had been formed by the Duke

Digitized by Google

of Elchingen's (Ney's) corps, and which was situated near this bridge, between the town and the *chateau*.

Several obstacles, arising from the nature of the country, prevented us from taking the direct road to Liouvavitschi; and even the track which we pursued was not exempt from difficulties. We were forced to pass through several defiles, and over many swampy meadows, and an almost impassable road, cut through the middle of a forest.

Before we arrived at this town, we crossed a ruinous bridge. The road was so dreadfully deep and clayey, that it was with the utmost difficulty the horses could proceed. This extreme humidity is caused by several rivers, which, surrounding the town, form extensive and dangerous morasses, that never dry.

As we entered Liouvavitschi, we saw the cavalry of the King of Naples returning from the environs of Roudnia and Inkovo; but instead of following the road to Razasna, they turned to the left, to pass the Dnieper at a higher point than that which had been marked out for us.

The reunion of the whole army on the borders of the river, plainly announced the intention of crossing it, and attacking Smolensko by the left bank, since the fortifications of the city are principally on this side. The order was soon issued,

Digitized by Google

to proceed to Razasna, where bridges had been thrown across to facilitate the passage.

Before our arrival at this river, we traversed an almost desert country. No village was to be seen on the road, and we rarely found any houses at which it was possible to stop. About half way on our route was a dangerous marsh, where we were forced to leave part of our baggage. After many difficulties we reached the Dnieper, which is called also the Borysthenes by the Greeks, a name which excited in our minds the sublimest ideas. The illusion, however, was soon destroyed, when we saw a shallow and insignificant stream. The river is so narrow, and its banks so steep, that it could not be seen till we were on its very brink; while the very steepness of the banks rendered the passage extremely difficult.

Near Razasna, all the different corps of the grand army, some coming from Orcha, and others from Babinovitschi, effected their junction. The Emperor had passed Razasna (Aug. 13) in the morning, and having inspected the divisions of the first corps just arrived from Mohilow, despatched them on the road towards Smolensko. This immense crowd of men thronging to the same point, while it augmented our privations, redoubled the confusion and disorder that reigned on the great road. The stragglers sought in vain to recover their proper regiments. They who

Digitized by Google

were intrusted with the most important orders, could not fulfil their mission, a dreadful tumult frequently arose on the bridges and in the defiles.

(August the 15th). Arriving at Liadoui (remarkable as being the last place where we found any Jews), we crossed a little river very near it, above which is a considerable eminence which entirely commands the town. We continued our march as far as Siniaki, a miserable hamlet, consisting only of a few houses, and situated about two hundred yards from the road. The Viceroy, intending to encamp in this place, gave orders for the troops to halt. In the meantime, the other divisions of the grand army marched towards Smolensko, and the cannonade which we heard made us presume that the town was vigorously attacked.

The next day (August the 16th) we remained in the same position, and during the whole of the day, great numbers of troops passed by us towards the city. Towards six o'clock in the evening we quitted Siniaki, and after three hours' march arrived at Krasnoë, a small town with some houses built of stone, and where the Viceroy established his posts of communication. We did not long stop here, but continuing our march, crossed a small river near Katova, above which was a rising ground. The Prince pitched his tent under a

Digitized by Google

large avenue of trees, surrounded by his division. At daybreak (August the 17th) we continued our route, and bivouacked three miles beyond the post of Korouitnïa in a wood of birch-trees near a lake. Our camp offered a most picturesque appearance. The Viceroy having caused his tent to be pitched in the middle of the wood, the officers slept in their carriages, and those who had none, cut down branches of trees to construct little huts, whilst their comrades lighted the fires to cook the provisions. As for the soldiers, some went on a foraging party, others washed their linen on the banks of a limpid stream, while the rest, after a long march, amused themselves in making war against the few ducks and geese that had escaped the rapacity of the cossacks.

We here learned that Smolensko, after a long-contested battle, had been set on fire by the Russians, and abandoned by their conquerors. This was an omen of mournful pressage to us, and proved to what extremities they will proceed who are determined not to bow to a foreign yoke. The next day we approached this unhappy town; but the Viceroy ordered us to halt in a wood, near the castle of Novoidwor, about three miles from the town, and went to join the Emperor. One of my comrades returning from Smolensko now related to me, in the following words, the circumstances of the battle, at which he was present.

Digitized by Google

" The position that we had occupied until the " 16th of this month made the enemy suppose " that we should attack Smolensko by the right " bank of the Dnieper; but the Emperor, by " a prompt and unexpected manœuvre, caused " the whole of the army to pass to the opposite " side. On the 14th the King of Naples (Mu- " rat), who still commanded the advanced-guard, " and supported by the Duke of Elchingen (Ney), " arrived at Krasnoë, and as you know already," said the officer to me, " gave battle to the twenty- " fifth Russian division, amounting to five thou- " sand infantry, and two thousand cavalry. " Krasnoë being carried, the cavalry of General " Grouchy executed some brilliant charges. The " enemy soon fled, leaving many cannons and a con- " siderable number of prisoners. Colonel Mar- " bœuf was there wounded at the head of his re- " giment. After this success, Napoleon, as early " as the morning of the 16th, appeared before Smo- " lensko. That town is surrounded by an ancient " wall, with battlements of eight thousand yards " in circumference, ten feet thick, and twenty- " five high, and at certain distances flanked with " enormous towers in the form of bastions, the " greater part of which were mounted with heavy " pieces of cannon.

" The Russians, still expecting the attack to " take place on the right bank of the Dnieper,

Digitized by Google

" kept a considerable portion of their troops on " that side of the river; but when they saw us " arrive by the left bank, they thought themselves " turned, and retreated with the utmost rapidity " to defend Smolensko, at the principal point in " which we were about to attack it. They main- " tained themselves with the greater obstinacy, " as Alexander, when he quitted the army, had " commanded them to give battle in order to save " Smolensko *.

" After employing the 16th in reconnoitring " the place and its environs, the Emperor con- " fided the left to the Duke of Elchingen (Ney), " inclining towards the Dnieper; the Prince of " Eckmuhl (Davoust) had the centre; the Prince " Poniatowski the right; and further on was the " cavalry of the King of Naples; while the " guard and ourselves, constituting the fourth " division, composed the reserve. The eighth " corps under the command of the Duke of " Abrantes (Junot) was also expected; but that " general, making a false movement, lost his " way †.

" Half the day was passed in reconnoitring. " The enemy occupied Smolensko with thirty " thousand men, the rest were in reserve on the

* See the Thirteenth Bulletin.

† See the Thirteenth Bulletin.

Digitized by Google

" right bank, communicating by means of bridges
" constructed below the town. But Napoleon,
" perceiving that the garrison, commanded by
" General Doctorow, availed themselves of every
" moment of time to strengthen their fortifica-
" tions, ordered Prince Poniatowski to advance,
" having on his left Smolensko, and on his right
" the Dnieper. He recommended him to con-
" struct some batteries to destroy the bridges, and
" by that means intercept the communication
" between the two banks. The Prince of Eck-
" muhl (Davoust), who still kept the centre, at-
" tacked two intrenched suburbs, each defended
" by seven or eight thousand infantry. General
" Friand finished the investiture of the place,
" taking his position between the first division
" and the Poles.

" In the afternoon the light cavalry of General
" Bruyères repulsed the Russian horse, and took
" possession of an eminence near the bridge. A
" battery of sixty pieces of cannon was established
" on that point, the fire of which was so well
" directed on the divisions of the enemy on the
" other bank, that they were compelled to retire.
" Against this battery were opposed two of the
" enemy's, consisting each of twenty pieces of can-
" non. The Prince of Eckmuhl (Davoust), who
" was charged with the storming of the town,
" confided the attack of the suburbs on the right,

Digitized by Google

"to General Morand; and those on the left, to "General Gudin. After a severe fire of mus- "ketry, these two divisions forced the positions of "the enemy, and pursued the Russians with won- "derful intrepidity, as far as the covered way, "which they found strewed with dead. On the "left, the Duke of Elchingen (Ney) forced the "intrenchments occupied by the enemy, and "compelled them to take refuge in the town, in "the towers, or on the ramparts, which they "defended with obstinacy, but they were at "length driven thence by the fire of the how- "itzers; while count Sorbin, commanding the "artillery of the guard, by placing his batteries "so as to enfilade the Russians, rendered it im- "practicable for them to maintain the covered "ways. General Barclay de Tolly perceiving "that an assault on the town was now likely to "be attempted, reinforced it with two new divi- "sions, and two regiments of infantry of the "guard. The battle continued until the close "of day. Soon after, thick columns of smoke "were seen to rise from different quarters, and "presently torrents of flames were distinctly ob- "served, spreading with incredible rapidity in "every direction. The whole city was speedily "on fire, and, in the middle of a fine summer's "night, presented to our view the same spectacle

Digitized by Google

" that an eruption of Mount Vesuvius offers to " the inhabitants of Naples.

" At one o'clock the ruins of the town were " abandoned. Our first grenadiers prepared to " mount the breach at two o'clock in the morn- " ing, when approaching without opposition, " they discovered that the place was entirely eva- " cuated. We took possession of it, and found " on the walls many pieces of cannon, which the " enemy could not take away.

" Never," said this officer to me, " can you " form an adequate idea of the dreadful scene " which the interior of Smolensko presented to " my view, and never during the whole course " of my life can I forget it. Every street, every " square, was covered with the bodies of the " Russians, dead or dying, while the flames shed " over them a horrible glare."

The next day (Aug. 19) we entered Smolensko by the suburb that is built along the bank of the river. In every direction we marched over scattered ruins and dead bodies. Palaces yet burning offered to our sight only walls half destroyed by the flames, and, thick among the fragments were the blackened carcasses of the wretched inhabitants whom the fire had consumed. The few houses that remained were completely filled by the soldiery, while at the door stood the

Digitized by Google

miserable proprietor without an asylum, deploring the death of his children, and the loss of his fortune. The churches alone afforded some consolation to the unhappy victims who had no other shelter. The cathedral, celebrated through Europe, and held in great veneration by the Russians, became the refuge of the unfortunate beings who had escaped the flames. In this church and round its altars, were seen whole families extended on the ground. In one place was an old man just expiring, and casting a look on the image of the saint whom he had all his life invoked; in another an infant whose feeble cries the mother, worn down with grief, was endeavouring to hush: and while she presented it with the breast, her tears dropped fast upon it.

In the midst of this desolation, the passage of the army into the interior of the town formed a striking contrast. On one side was seen the abject submission of the conquered—on the other the pride attendant upon victory; the former had lost their all—the latter, rich with spoil, and ignorant of defeat, marched proudly on to the sound of warlike music, inspiring the unhappy remains of a vanquished population with mingled fear and admiration.

The affair of Smolensko cost the Russians twelve thousand men, a third of whom were left on the field of battle. Although we were the assailants

Digitized by Google

our loss did not exceed four thousand. This will not appear extraordinary when it is recollected that the Moscovites always intoxicate themselves before they commence an engagement, and that their riflemen, more bold than skilful, expose themselves to danger without doing much injury to their adversaries. According to every report, the enemy had many generals killed. On our side, the polish General Grabrowski died gloriously on the field, while Generals Zaionshech, Grandeau, and Dalton, proved by their wounds how much they had contributed to the victory.

The grand bridge across the Dnieper communicating with the other part of the town, in which there did not remain a single house, had been burnt, but was now promptly repaired. In the meantime the cavalry of General Grouchy, with the fourth corps, and all their artillery, crossed a ford at the extremity of the suburb by which we entered. In this interval the other bridges were constructed, which so accelerated the passage, that before the close of the day the artillery and cavalry of the King of Naples were on the road to Moscow, in pursuit of the enemy.

The troops of Prince Eugene and General Grouchy having crossed the river, encamped on the heights that surround the town, near the post-road from Porietsch to Petersburg. This was a position of the greatest importance, and every

Digitized by Google

one was astonished that the enemy had not defended it better. Had they made a stand here, our march would have been considerably retarded; the principal road to Moscow would have been cut off, nor could we have retained possession of the town which this position completely commanded.

While the centre of the army pursued its triumphant career, General Gouvion St. Cyr gained some important victories on the banks of the Dwina. After the battle of Drissa, Prince Wittgenstein, being reinforced by twelve battalions, resolved to act on the offensive against the Duke of Reggio (Oudinot). The latter, seeing himself on the point of being attacked, united the Bavarian corps (the sixteenth) to that which he already commanded. The engagement actually took place on the 16th and 17th of August; but at the moment the Duke of Reggio was taking measures to repel it, a grape-shot struck him in the shoulder, and so dangerously wounded him that he was compelled to quit the field of battle, and to give up the command to General Gouvion St. Cyr.

The latter disposed every thing for the attack the next morning at daybreak; and the better to deceive the Russians, he ordered all the baggage, and a great part of the artillery and cavalry, to retire on the left bank of the Dwina, in sight of the enemy, and, ascending the river, to repass it at

Digitized by Google

Polotsk without being seen. The enemy, deceived by this skilful manœuvre, believed that we were retreating, and advanced in pursuit; but instead of finding us disposed to quit the ground, we presented ourselves ranged in order of battle, and our artillery, advantageously placed, commenced a destructive fire on them. At the same time our infantry, under the protection of our cannon, attacked the left and centre of the corps commanded by General Wittgenstein. The two divisions of General Wrede and Roy having combined their movements with great bravery and skill, marched out of Spas together. The division of Legrand in position on the left of this village was connected with that of General Verdier, one of whose brigades observed the right of the enemy and the division of Merle covered the front of the town of Polotsk.

The enemy, although surprised at seeing us so well disposed, advanced with great resolution, confiding in their artillery; but towards the evening, Prince Wittgenstein seeing his centre and and his left forced, retired in echelon after furiously defending every position. By this obstinate resistance he succeeded in saving his army, which, notwithstanding the arrival of powerful reinforcements, endeavoured in vain to resume offensive operations. We should have taken a great number of prisoners had not the woods

Digitized by Google

facilitated their escape. Those who fell into our hands had been left wounded on the field of battle, and by their numbers we were enabled to judge of the severe loss which the Russians had sustained. Several pieces of cannon added to the trophies of this glorious day.

This victory was however dearly purchased by the loss of several brave Bavarian officers, especially Generals de Roy and Sierbien. The first was particularly regretted. The soldiers lost in him a father, and the officers a chief whose talents and consummate experience were held in veneration by the whole Bavarian army. Generals, officers, and soldiers, rivalled each other in contributing to the success of the day. Among the first, Count Gouvion St. Cyr rendered a just tribute of praise to Generals Legrand, Verdier (wounded), Merle, Von Wrede, and Aubry; the latter, who was General of the artillery, particularly distinguished himself in his department. The Count closed his report by invoking the benevolence of the Emperor towards his officers. He thus did justice to all except to himself, on which point he observed a profound silence; but his modesty was the more conspicuous, and displayed to more eminent advantage these talents which, a few days afterwards, were rewarded on the field of battle with a marshal's staff.

While our corps on the left gained these im-

Digitized by Google

portant victories on the Dwina; those of the centre distinguished themselves in combats no less glorious.

The Duke of Elchingen (Ney) having passed the Dnieper (19th August) above Smolensko, joined the King of Naples in pursuit of the enemy. After marching a league he met part of the rear-guard, consisting of six thousand men. Their position was carried in an instant, and the bayonet covered the field of battle with their dead.

This corps, which protected the retreat of the Russians having been forced hastily to retire, took post on the rising ground of Valontina. The first line was soon broken by the 18th regiment, and towards four o'clock in the afternoon, a fire of musketry commenced with the whole rear-guard, then consisting of fifteen thousand men. The Duke of Abrantes (Junot), who had lost his way on the right of Smolensko, could not reach the road to Moscow time enough to cut off the retreat of this rear-guard *. The first columns of the enemy therefore returned to the charge, and brought four divisions successively into the field. The Russians were the more interested in defending this position, as beside its real strength, it had always been regarded as impregnable, from the defeats which the Poles had uniformly sustained

* See 13th and 14th Bulletin of the Campaign.

Digitized by Google

here in their ancient wars. Thence the Russians superstitiously connected with this plain the idea of certain victory, and decorated it with the pompous title of the *Sacred Field*.

If the enemy attached the highest importance to the preservation of this position, it was not of less moment for us to carry it, that we might be enabled more effectually to annoy his retreat, and to obtain possession of all the baggage, and the waggons with the wounded from Smolensko, the evacuation of which had been protected by the rear-guard.

At six o'clock in the evening the division of Gudin, sent to support the thirteenth corps against the numerous troops which the enemy recalled to his succour, appeared in column before the centre of the enemy's position. Supported by the division of Ledru, he instantly carried it. The 7th light infantry, and the 12th, 21st, and 127th, which composed the division of Gudin, charged with such impetuosity that the enemy immediately fled, believing that they were engaged with the imperial guards. But so much bravery cost us the life of the gallant general who commanded them. He was one of the most distinguished officers in the army, and was equally regretted for his private virtues, and his military skill and intrepidity. His death was however well avenged. His division made a dreadful carnage of the enemy,

Digitized by Google

who fled towards Moscow, leaving the *Sacred Field* covered with their dead. Among the rest were found the bodies of Generals Skalon and Balla; and it was said that the Russians in the death of the General of cavalry sustained a loss equally great with that which we had to deplore.

At three o'clock in the morning of the following day the Emperor distributed rewards on the field of battle to the regiments which had distinguished themselves. To the 127th, a new regiment which had contributed much to the glory of the day, Napoleon granted the right of carrying an eagle. This privilege they could not before claim, because they had not been present in any engagement. These rewards bestowed on a spot rendered famous by victory, and in the midst of the dying and the dead, exhibited a scene of grandeur that assimilated our exploits to the heroic deeds of ancient times.

At Smolensko the fourth corps changed the chief of its staff. General Dessoles, who had till then filled that situation, disgusted that his services remained so long unnoticed, requested that he might enjoy in retirement the esteem which his talents had procured him. The army, recollecting that he had shared in the glory and the disgrace of Moreau, approved his determination, well knowing the difficulty which he would find in obtaining an equal rank with those who

Digitized by Google

had outstepped him in his career, and who would always be preferred before him. The Emperor yielding to the entreaties of this skilful general, granted him an honourable retreat, and appointed Baron Guilleminot his successor, who was well known to the Viceroy, by having exercised the same functions for a short time after the battle of Wagram.

During the four days that Napoleon remained at Smolensko, he reviewed the different corps which had distinguished themselves since the opening of the campaign. In this respect none was more justly entitled to honourable distinction than the fourth corps. It was at length granted us, and the chiefs of each division, with the exception of General Pino who was gone to Witepsk with the fifteenth, received orders to put their soldiers under arms (22d of August).

The whole of our army in its best accoutrements was drawn up on a vast plain a little beyond that on which we were encamped. Its fine appearance, and above all the recollection of the brilliant affair of Witepsk, gained our corps the rewards due to its bravery, and which were worthy of the munificence of the chief who deigned to grant them.

It had hitherto been believed, that Napoleon, desirous only to re-establish the kingdom of Poland, would terminate his conquests by the cap-

Digitized by Google

ture of the two towns of Witepsk and Smolensko, which by their position completely defended the narrow passage comprised between the Dnieper and the Dwina. Every one considered these towns as our destined winter-quarters, and if instead of madly pushing forward he had closed this campaign with the capture of Riga, the fortifying of Witepsk and Smolensko, and, more particularly, the organization of Poland, the whole of which he had now conquered, Napoleon would doubtless in the following spring have compelled the Russians either to subscribe to his conditions, or to run the risk of the almost certain destruction both of Moscow and Petersburg, since the French army was then at an equal distance from each of these cities. But instead of adopting so wise a plan, this warrior, recollecting the fortunate issue of his late campaigns, in which he had always dictated peace in the very palace of the sovereigns whom he had conquered, was dazzled by the eclat of his former treaties. The remembrance of his former glory so infatuated him, that he disdained the counsels of prudence, and at a distance of six hundred leagues from France, with worn-out horses, and destitute of provisions, magazines, or hospitals, ventured upon the desert road of Moscow. As a last proof of his imprudence, he left in his rear a Russian army cantoned in Moldavia, and which

Digitized by Google

was ready to march against us on the ratification of the treaty of peace which had already been concluded with the Porte.

This army having ceased hostilities against the Turks was then commanded by Admiral Tschikakoff, who constantly sent fresh troops to reinforce the army of Wolhynia, which was opposed to the corps of Prince Schwartzenberg. Napoleon had flattered himself that the Austrians would have repulsed the corps of Tormasow, Ertel, and Essen, as effectually as we had beaten that of Barclay de Tolly, and that consequently our allies, ravaging the Ukraine, would penetrate into the governments of Kiew and Kaluga, and join us on our entry into Moscow. But their want of zeal in our cause, and especially the manœuvres of the Russian generals, frustrated this great plan. Victors and vanquished by turns, they defended every position; and, taking advantage of the chances of war, returned continually to the ground which they had abandoned. The fortress of Bobruïsk therefore continued to hold out, and the Austrians never saw the banks of the Dnieper.

Leaving Smolensko (23d August), we proceeded to Volodimerowa, a village situated on the main road. On an eminence to the right, surrounded by marshes, is a *chateau* built of wood. We halted on this height, at a distance of about

Digitized by Google

five leagues from Smolensko. It was then the intention of the Prince to march to Doukhovchtchina, and afterwards to fall back on Doroghobouï, where the centre of the grand army was quartered; but General Grouchy, who had preceded us with his cavalry, announced that he had repulsed the enemy more than twenty leagues. The Viceroy (24th August), who could now dispense with pushing on to Doukhovchtchina, determined to search for a path that would conduct him straight to the high road leading to Doroghobouï. He found this route after following an excellent road traced by the Russians themselves in effecting their retreat.

On this march we traversed a fertile and luxuriant country. We saw, for the first time in Russia, cattle grazing in the fields, inhabitants remaining undisturbed in their villages, and houses that had not been plundered. The soldier possessing abundance forgot his fatigues, and regarded not the length of his march, which continued several hours. At length we arrived, late in the evening, at Pologhi, a village at a small distance from the road which we were seeking. On the following morning (25th of August) we crossed the Wop, a small river that would have attracted our attention more could we have foreseen how fatal it would one day prove to us. We might however have formed

Digitized by Google

an idea of what it would be in winter, from the difficulty we found in passing it in the midst of summer. Its bed was very deep, and the banks so steep that the artillery crossed it with great difficulty, and only by doubling the number of horses to each piece.

Continuing our route, we again came in sight of the Dnieper, whose marshes covered with wood nearly reached the hill on which lay the road we sought. Proceeding about a league we perceived the high turrets of the beautiful *chateau* of Zazélé, appearing at a distance like a considerable town. Close by was a lake where the cavalry of General Grouchy refreshed themselves. They had arrived before us, and were encamped round the *chateau* of Zazélé.

The Viceroy despatched some officers from this place to Napoleon, who was at Doroghobouï; but although General Grouchy had pushed his advanced-guard along the high road, we doubted whether it were cleared as far as that town. The aides-de-camp therefore crossed the Dnieper below Zazélé, and pursuing the post-road from Smolensko, they arrived safe at Doroghobouï, where the staff of the grand army had established its head-quarters.

This town, situated on an eminence, offered a military position capable of effectually stopping the progress of any army marching on the two

Digitized by Google

high roads from Smolensko and Witepsk to Moscow. Notwithstanding these advantages, it was very feebly defended, owing to the great losses which the Russians had sustained in the battles of Smolensko and Valontina. Our corps was entering Doroghobouï, when an aide-de-camp from Napoleon brought despatches to the Viceroy. Having read them, the Prince gave orders to select the most advantageous situation in the neighbourhood to encamp his divisions. The want of water obliging us to push on to Mikailovskoë, we established ourselves near that village. The cavalry was in the rear, the infantry of the royal guard in the centre; and on the flanks were the two French divisions which formed part of our corps.

At a league from Mikailovskoë we passed through two villages situated in a marshy valley. Shortly after, we entered the plain through which runs the Dnieper, and followed the road to Blaghové, where we intended to cross the river. On our right were some cultivated hills with several villages. The smoke issuing from the houses made us conjecture that they had not been abandoned. We saw at a distance their peaceable inhabitants standing on the summit of the hills, anxiously observing whether we came to trouble the peace of their cottages.

The sources of the Dnieper not being far

Digitized by Google

distant, the river is here little larger than a brook. We forded it with ease, and the artillery had no other difficulty than to climb its banks, which, like all the rivers of Russia, are extremely steep and high, to contain the great masses of water produced by the melting of the snow.

The Viceroy did not quit the bank till all the troops had crossed the river. The fourth corps still forming the extreme point of the left of the grand army, we marched over almost unbeaten tracks. To prevent our wandering, the Prince ordered General Triaire, who commanded the advanced-guard, to post dragoons along the road. This wise precaution proved beneficial to the detachments, and especially to the stragglers, who now having no doubt which road they ought to pursue, arrived all safely at Agopochina. Before this measure was adopted, these unhappy beings, when left in the rear from fatigue and sickness, found themselves in the midst of thick forests, or on immense plains intersected by numerous paths, all equally beaten; and not knowing the language of the country, nor meeting with a single person to direct them, they wandered about in these vast solitudes, and at length perished by famine, fatigue, or the sword of the enraged peasants.

The village of Agopochina, at which we halted (August 27th), is remarkable for a large *chateau*, and a noble church built of stone. The four

Digitized by Google

sides are ornamented peristyles. The sanctuary constructed according to the Greek ritual, is very rich, and adorned with several paintings, which reminded us of those which the Greeks brought from Constantinople, when, in the fourteenth century, they first established their schools in Italy. The Commandant Sewlinge, who had lately joined our staff, was sent from this village with important despatches to the King of Naples. The King not having received these despatches, and the Commandant never returning, we felt the painful conviction that he had fallen into the hands of the cossacks.

The next day (28th August) we continued to flank the left of the high road, marching always nearly in a line with the corps of the centre. The track which we followed had never before been traversed by an army. It was cut by frequent ravines, and often so narrow, that it resembled a path traced merely to divide the grounds. Arrived at a village the name of which was unknown, we found three roads; one straight before us, one on our right, and a third on our left. We followed the latter, which conducted us, after a march of three hours, to an abandoned *chateau* within a league of Béreski.

Early in the morning (29th August) we left this *chateau* in a thick fog. The frequent halts which the Viceroy made, and the reconnoitring

Digitized by Google

parties which he sent to the right, to listen whether cannon were firing on the high road, convinced us that he was impatient to know what obstacles Napoleon met with in his march.

We approached Viazma. This small town, which indeed may be reckoned a large one in Russia, was very advantageously situated for the enemy. Placed among the numerous sources of the river of the same name, it is surrounded by ravines, and stands on a beautiful eminence, commanding the plain and the defile through which passes the high road from Smolensko. The Russians did not profit as they ought to have done by these advantages; after a feeble defence they set fire to the principal buildings and retreated. When we arrived Viazma was a prey to the flames; and although accustomed to conflagrations, we could not help regarding with pity this unhappy town so lately peopled by ten thousand inhabitants. Though newly founded, it contained more than sixteen churches. The houses, all new, and elegantly constructed, were enveloped in clouds of smoke, and their destruction excited the greatest regret, as they were the noblest which we had seen since we quitted Smolensko.

The Viceroy halted on the plain more than two hours. Placed on a rising ground, we observed distinctly the progress of the flames, and heard

Digitized by Google

the guns firing on the enemy beyond the town. A numerous cavalry which arrived from every quarter encamped in the environs. Prince Eugene, having received the Emperor's orders, now passed the Viazma, and proceeding to the left, overtook the troops which he had despatched before him, and whose march had been retarded by the passage of the river. We afterwards met with another branch of the Viazma, the approach to which was so muddy, that it was impossible to ford it at any point. It was therefore necessary to march along the bank till we found a wretched bridge, by which we crossed the river. Hence we came to a little hill, from the top of which we perceived at a distance a village with a beautiful *chateau* consisting of four pavilions, and a noble church. On entering it, we learned that the village was called Novoe, and that the *chateau* had been plundered by the light cavalry.

We halted here (30th August), having on our left the royal guards and the fourteenth division, with the thirteenth in front. The artillery of these divisions was placed in batteries facing the different roads on which it was possible that the enemy might appear. The Emperor likewise halted at Viazma. He sent forward the third corps to support the King of Naples, who closely pursued the enemy on the road to Moscow without being able to bring him to a serious action.

Digitized by Google

As we commenced our march (31st August), we were rejoined by the Bavarian cavalry under General Preyssing. The Viceroy and the staff accompanied us. We saw on the road two neat *chateaux* completely ravaged. We halted at the second, and passed through a delightful garden with beautiful walks tastefully arranged. The pavilions had been newly decorated, but they now offered an image of the most frightful desolation. The furniture was broken to pieces, fragments of the most precious china were scattered about the garden, and many exquisite paintings had been torn from their frames and were dispersed by the winds.

The Viceroy had pursued his march beyond the *chateau* of Pakrovo; but observing that the infantry was far in the rear, he returned to the *chateau*, in which some provisions were found, and especially a quantity of oats in the straw, and excellent forage.

Since the affair at Witepsk the fourth corps had not met the enemy, and had not even seen any of those detachments of cossacks which in the first Polish campaign continually harassed our troops, and intercepted the baggage; but after we passed Viazma, more circumspection was necessary on our march.

We were indeed assured that we should soon experience some serious opposition; and, the

Digitized by Google

next day (1st September), being about half way on our accustomed march, our advanced-guard was stopped by the cossacks. Two or three cannon-shots were the signal of this rencontre. The Viceroy immediately put the cavalry of the Italian guards in order of battle, preceded by a considerable number of sharp-shooters. These drove before them the enemy's squadrons, who retired in proportion as we advanced. They continued to retreat as far as Ghiat, of which the Emperor had just taken possession. Beyond this town is a small river, which they crossed, and immediately, as if to observe us, drew up in order of battle on on eminence that commands the plain by which we arrived. The Viceroy, after having made me reconnoitre the fords which might facilitate the passage of the river, ordered the Bavarian troops to cross it at a point that had been explored, and which was exactly between two little villages occupied by the cossacks. The enemy no sooner perceived this movement, than they abandoned the villages and the heights, of which the Bavarian cavalry, followed by their artillery, soon took possession. Arrived on these heights, we saw the cossacks flying in every direction. They were closely pursued; but as night approached our corps established itself in the little village of Paulovo, at the distance of half a leage from Ghiat.

Digitized by Google

The head-quarters having remained three days in Ghiat, we halted likewise at Paulovo and Woremiewo (2d and 3d September). The Emperor here issued general orders commanding the troops to employ the repose now granted them, in collecting provisions, cleaning their arms, and preparing for the battle, which the enemy seemed willing to accept. Lastly, the marauding detachments were ordered to return on the following evening, if they wished to participate in the honour of the engagement.

Digitized by Google

BOOK IV.

THE MOSKWA.

After the capture of Smolensko, the Emperor Napoleon was not ignorant that Alexander, having concluded a peace with the Turks, would soon have the whole of the Moldavian army at his disposal: nevertheless he followed up his successes without disquieting himself respecting the future. In the meantime the Russians, terrified at the disaster which had attended the adoption of the plan of Barclay de Tolly, exclaimed that it was time to come to a decisive engagement. No one appeared so worthy of the supreme command in this critical conjuncture as Prince Kutusoff, the glorious conqueror of the Ottoman power, and who, a victim to the strange ingratitude and injustice of courts, languished forgotten on his paternal estate, although his victories alone had purchased the honourable treaty which had been so lately subscribed by the divan.

This general, who was regarded by the Mos-

Digitized by Google

covites as the hope of their country, arrived at Czarévo-Saïmiche (29th August). The officers and soldiers hailed as their chief this venerable warrior, already celebrated in the annals of Russia; and the inhabitants of Ghiat informed us that the sight of him had inspired the whole army with hope and joy. In fact, he had scarcely arrived, when he announced that the Russian army would retreat no further. That he might better defend Moscow, within four days' march of which we were now arrived, he chose a strong position between Ghiat and Mojaïsk, where he could advantageously await one of those decisive battles which often determine the fate of empires. Each party was sanguine in its expectation of victory. The Moscovites contended for their country, their homes, and their children. Our soldiers, accustomed to conquer, and filled with those grand and heroic ideas which continued success naturally inspires, eagerly demanded the fight; and such is the superiority which courage gives over mere numbers, that on the eve of the battle we busily calculated the fruits of our approaching victory.

During the stay of Napoleon at Ghiat, our head-quarters were transported from Paulovo to Woremiewo, where was a beautiful seat belonging to Prince Kutusoff. The staff had just entered the village, when the Viceroy, accompanied

Digitized by Google

by several officers, arrived to examine the environs of the place. He had scarcely been there a quarter of an hour, when the whole plain was filled with cossacks, who advanced as if they would charge the group which surrounded the Prince Eugene; but on seeing some dragoons who formed his escort, they fled precipitately, and appeared no more in the neighbourhood of Woremiewo.

While we remained in this village, some soldiers of the 106th regiment going on a foraging party, fell in with a post-chaise containing a Russian officer and a surgeon. The former, on being interrogated by an officer of the staff, declared that he came from Riga, his native country, and was going to the head-quarters of Kutusoff, who had for some days superseded Barclay de Tolly. Although this officer was descended from a good Livonian family, and was decorated with several crosses and medals, the Viceroy would not see him, justly suspecting that he had purposely exposed himself to discover our manœuvres. Several peasants who were surprised on an unfrequented road, and particularly in the neighbourhood of Mojaïsk where the enemy had intrenched themselves, almost reduced this suspicion to a certainty.

Having passed two days at Woremiewo, we left it on the 4th of September, and passed

Digitized by Google

through some forests where they informed us the cossacks had been seen. The reports of the advanced-guard confirming this intelligence, the Viceroy halted in an extensive plain where our whole corps was assembled. The Prince placing himself at the head of the cavalry, ordering the infantry to follow, while the guards, placed as a reserve, brought up the rear. In this order we advanced to meet the enemy. When we reached the little village of Louzos, we found ourselves impeded by a rivulet. The cossacks who were assembled on the opposite side, appeared to be forming themselves into squadrons to oppose our passage; but the Viceroy ordering the cavalry to mount the ravine, the Russians, fearing lest they should be charged in the rear, fled with precipitation.

During the whole of our march we heard a brisk cannonade on our right, which announced that we were not far from the road which Napoleon had taken. Looking in that direction, we could perceive the smoke of the artillery, and the flames ascending from many villages. Near the post-house, called Ghridneva, was another immense ravine that crossed the main road; and on the opposite side was a steep hill, on which the Russians had established some batteries, after an obstinate engagement that had taken place there during the day.

Digitized by Google

When the enemy perceived that the fourth corps was forming on their right, they despatched a numerous cavalry to reconnoitre our position, which retired when our artillery opened upon them. This cavalry appearing for a moment disposed to maintain itself on the edge of a wood, the Viceroy ordered Colonel Rambourg of the 3d Italian chasseurs, to march upon that point, and bring them to action. The cossacks, who doubtless constituted part of the regular troops, observed this movement without being intimidated; and when the chasseurs were on the point of charging them, rushed from the wood, crying "Houra! houra!"—a cry since become too celebrated, and which the Tartars always use when they attack their enemies. The Italian chasseurs received them with great coolness. The action was smart, but of no duration, for the cossacks seeing the Bavarian light-horse advancing, quitted the field, leaving some prisoners in our possession.

The Russians still maintained their positions on the summit of the hill, whence they kept up a galling fire on us as we advanced. Several bullets fell among a group of officers who surrounded the Prince. We speedily passed the ravine in spite of all opposition, and effected our junction with the advanced-guard of the grand army, commanded by the King of Naples. That monarch

Digitized by Google

was distinguished from afar by his white plume, as stationed at the head of his troops. He animated them to the combat by his own example.

As soon as the Viceroy was informed that the King of Naples was there, he went to concert with him the necessary dispositions. The place of their conference was not changed, and both of them discoursed with the utmost sang-froid, though exposed to the fire of the batteries, and seeing those around them falling every minute by the shot of the enemy.

At the approach of night we returned to Louzos, where we had no other shelter than some miserable barns covered with thatch. Hunger redoubled our sufferings, and we had nothing to satisfy its cravings. At the same time we were close to the intrenched camp of Mojaïsk, where Kutusoff hoped to accomplish our defeat; and this he would certainly have effected, if he could only have detained us a few days before his formidable lines.

The position of Ghridneva, which the Russians had defended on the preceding evening, was evacuated during the night. The King of Naples, ardent in pursuit (5th September), rapidly advanced. The fourth corps, which continued to flank the left wing of the army, always kept at the distance of about a league from the main road. On leaving a wood infested by the

Digitized by Google

cossacks, we passed through many villages that had been pillaged by these barbarians. The horrible desolation which marked their career enabled us easily to follow their steps. Being arrived at the foot of a hill, we discovered some of their squadrons on the top ranged in order of battle round a noble *chateau* which overlooked the neighbouring plains. The Viceroy immediately ordered the Bavarians to advance on this point, who, notwithstanding the difficulties of the ground, reached the summit in the greatest order. As our allies advanced, the enemy retired: and as they descended the other side of the hill, our artillery-men directed upon them the cannon which had been planted on the terrace of the *chateau*. We pursued them through the wood, and being arrived at an open place, we saw long columns of Russians defiling, who, pursued by our troops, took up a position on an extensive plain at the summit of a hill about half a league distant, and where, it was said, Prince Kutusoff intended to hazard a decisive battle. On our right, we saw below us the abbey of Kolotskoï. The massy towers of this building gave it the appearance of a town. The coloured tiles with which it was covered reflected the rays of the sun through the thick dust caused by our immense cavalry, and served to heighten still more the gloomy and savage aspect which the whole sur-

Digitized by Google

rounding country presented. The Russians intending to arrest our progress here, had devastated in the most frightful manner all the plain on which we were forced to encamp. The corn, though yet green, had been cut, the woods destroyed, and the villages burnt. In a word, we found no food for our horses, and no shelter for ourselves.

We halted on a hill. During this time the centre of the army vigorously pursued the enemy, and obliged them to retire upon the eminence which they had intrenched. We remained inactive till nearly two o'clock in the afternoon, when the Viceroy, followed only by his staff, reconnoitred the approaches to the Russian position. He had scarcely commenced, when our dragoons placed as sharp-shooters announced the approach of Napoleon. Immediately the name of the Emperor passed from mouth to mouth, and every one awaited his arrival with the greatest impatience. He soon made his appearance followed by his principal officers, and took his station on an eminence whence he could easily command the whole camp of the enemy. After having long and attentively regarded their position, and carefully observed all the adjacent country, he began to hum some insignificant tune. He then conversed a moment with the Viceroy; and mounting his horse, went to concert the plan of attack with the other generals.

Digitized by Google

The Viceroy now ordered the divisions of Delzons and Broussier to advance. The Italian guard, which had been left in the rear, was placed in reserve. These two divisions had scarcely reached the eminence whence they could attack the Russians, when a brisk fire of musketry commenced on our right, between the sharp-shooters of Gerard's division (third division, first corps), and those of the enemy. At first our troops advanced close to the ravine which separated us from the enemy, but superior numbers obliged them to retire.

The Russians had a redoubt towards the right extremity of our army, whose destructive fire carried consternation through the ranks. They had constructed it to fortify their left wing, which was the weakest part of their intrenched camp. Napoleon understood this, and saw the necessity of taking that redoubt. The honour of the affair was confided to Compan's division (fourth division, first corps), and these gallant men advanced to the attack with an intrepidity, which ensured the success of the enterprise. In the meantime, Prince Poniatowski manœuvred on our right with his cavalry, to turn the enemy's position; and when he was at a proper distance, Compan's division attacked the redoubt, and succeeded in carrying it after an hour's fighting. The Russians completely routed, abandoned he neighbouring

Digitized by Google

woods, and retreating in disorder towards the principal eminence, rejoined the centre of their army.

The division of Compans, in proving itself worthy of the brilliant enterprise with which it was intrusted, purchased that honour with considerable loss. The acquisition of this important position cost us the lives of 1,200 of our men, more than half of whom remained dead in the intrenchments which they had so gloriously carried. As Napoleon was on the following morning reviewing the 61st regiment, which had suffered most, he asked the colonel what he had done with one of his battalions. "SIRE," replied he, "*it is in the redoubt.*"

The possession of the redoubt did not in the least determine the success of the battle. Before the general engagement began, Napoleon wished to turn the left wing of the Russians. They had forseen this manœuvre, and had placed the whole of the corps of Tutsekkoff (the third) and the militia of Moscow in ambuscade behind the thick underwood which covered the extremity of their left; while the 2d, 4th, and 6th corps formed two lines of infantry in the rear, protected by the works which connected this grand redoubt with the wood. Our brave light troops recommenced the attack with redoubled vigour; and although the day was nearly closed, the fire on both sides

Digitized by Google

continued with equal fury. At the same time, several villages on fire to the right spread around a frightful glare. The cries of the combatants, and the flames which were vomited from a thousand brasen mouths, and which carried every where desolation and death, completed the horror of the scene. Our corps, ranged in order of battle, received with intrepidity the fire of the enemy, and coolly closed the ranks, as soon as a cannon-ball had laid any of our comrades low.

In the meantime, the night becoming more obscure abated the fire without abating our ardour; and our soldiers, uncertain of their aim, reserved their strength and their ammunition for the morrow. Scarcely had we ceased firing, when the Russians, whose camp resembled a vast amphitheatre, lighted innumerable fires. The whole of their camp was one uninterrupted blaze of light, which, while it presented a grand and sublime appearance, formed a striking contrast with our bivouac, where the soldiers, unable to procure wood, reposed in utter darkness, and heard no sound but the groans of the wounded.

Our head quarters were established on the spot where the Italian guard was placed in reserve. Couched in the underwood, we slept soundly after the fatigues of the day, in spite of an impetuous wind, and a rain excessively cold. Towards midnight I was awakened by the chief of

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

our staff, who informed me that the Emperor wished for a plan of the ground which we had occupied the preceding evening. I transmitted it to prince Eugene, who immediately sent it to Napoleon. The next morning, at daybreak (6th of September), the Viceroy ordered me to complete the plan by inspecting the whole line, and approaching as near the enemy as I possibly could, that I might the better discover the exact nature of the ground on which they were encamped, and especially to observe whether there were any masked batteries, or ravines unknown to us*.

In obedience to my instructions I advanced, and discovered that the Russian camp was situated behind the river Kologha upon a narrow eminence, and that its left was very much weakened by the loss of the redoubt which we had taken the evening before. In front of the camp and opposite to us was the village of Borodino, an extremely strong position†, situated at the confluence of a

* The plan, which will be found here, has been engraved after that which the Viceroy used on the day of battle.

† Napoleon said in his bulletin of the battle of the Moskwa, "The Viceroy, who formed our left, attacked and took the "village of Borodino, which the enemy could not defend." Prince Kutusoff on the contrary wrote to the Emperor Alexander, "The position which I have chosen in the village of Bo-"rodino, is one of the best that can be found in a flat country. "It is to be wished that the French would attack us in this

Digitized by Google

little rivulet, with the Kologha. Upon this eminence were two grand redoubts about two hundred toises from each other. That on the right had fired on us the evening before; that on the left was built on the ruins of a village which they had destroyed for this purpose. The latter redoubt communicated with Borodino by three bridges constructed upon the Kologha. This village, and the rivulet which was in front, constituted the first line of the enemy's fortifications.

The Italian cavalry had crossed the rivulet of Borodino at the extremity of our left; but the village situated on an eminence, was defended by a numerous corps of Russian troops. All this ground was exposed to the fire of their grand redoubts, as well as that of several smaller masked batteries along the river. The enemy was perfectly aware that our success on the preceding evening had enabled us to cross the Kologha on our right, and push forward the greater part of our troops to the rear of the eminence on which their principal redoubt was placed.

We passed the rest of the day in reconnoitring

"position." We made the attack, and the village was so well defended, that General Plausanne, and Colonel Demay of the artillery, officers of our corps, were killed in the commencement of the action. The Russians have given to this bloody day the name of the *Battle of Borodino*.

Digitized by Google

the position of the Russians. General Danthouard caused the redoubts which were placed too much in the rear, to be reconstructed; and on the left some epaulments were thrown up, where cannon might be placed in battery. In fact, all was prepared for a decisive engagement, when, towards evening, the Emperor sent a proclamation to the chiefs of the corps, with orders not to read it to the soldiers till the next day, should they then come to action; for although the position was both advantageous and strong, the enemy had so often declined giving battle, that it was to be feared they would again act as they had done at Witepsk and Valontina. Here, however, our rapid marches, and the distance of our reserves, had equalized* the forces of the oppoite parties, and the Russians were forced to come to action, if they would save Moscow, from which we were distant only 26 leagues. In addition to this, the fatigue of our soldiers, and the exhaustion of our horses, seemed to promise to the Russians an easy victory. On the other hand, we were well assured that we must either conquer or perish: and this idea inspired us with such courage, that in spite of the numbers of the Russian army, and their impregnable intrenchments, we regarded our entrance into Moscow as certain and near at hand.

* Each army consisted of 120, or 130,000 men.

Digitized by Google

Although, worn out with fatigue, we felt the want of sleep, there were many among us so enamoured of glory, and so flushed with the hope of the morrow's success, that they were absolutely incapable of repose. As they passed the wakeful hours, and the silence and darkness of midnight stole upon them, while the fires of the sleeping soldiers, now almost extinct, threw their last rays of light over the heaps of arms piled around, they gave themselves up to profound meditation. They reflected on the wonderful events of our strange expedition; they mused on the result of a battle which was to decide the fate of two powerful empires; they compared the stillness of the night with the tumult of the morrow: they fancied that Death was now hovering over their crowded ranks, but total darkness prevented them from distinguishing who would be the unhappy victims. They then thought of their parents, their country; and the uncertainty whether they should ever see these beloved objects again, plunged them into the deepest melancholy. But suddenly, before daybreak, the beat of the drum was heard, the officers cried to arms, the men eagerly rushed to their different stations, and all, in order for battle, awaited the signal for action. The colonels, placing themselves in the centre of their regiments, ordered the trumpet to sound, and

Digitized by Google

every captain, surrounded by his company, read aloud the following proclamation :—

" SOLDIERS,

" This is the battle so much desired by you! " The victory depends on yourselves. It is now " necessary to us. It will give us abundance of " good winter-quarters, and a prompt return to " our country! Behave as at Austerlitz, at " Friedland, at Witepsk, at Smolensko, and let " the latest posterity recount with pride your " conduct on this day; let them say of you,— " 'He was at the great battle under the walls of " 'Moscow.' "

Every one was penetrated with the truths contained in these energetic words, and replied to them by reiterated acclamations. Some were animated by the love of glory, others flattered by the hope of reward, but all were convinced, that imperious necessity compelled us to conquer or to die. To the sentiment of self-preservation, were added ideas of duty and of valour. Every heart was animated, every breast proudly swelled, and each flattered himself that this important day might place him in the rank of those privileged men, who were born to excite the envy of their cotemporaries, and the admiration of posterity.

Such were the feelings of the army, when a

Digitized by Google

radiant sun, bursting from the thickest fog, shone on many of us for the last time. It is reported, that at this sight, Napoleon exclaimed to those around him, "Behold the sun of Austerlitz." The army hailed the happy presage, and was electrified by the glorious recollection.

The grand manœuvres which the first and fifth corps, commanded by the Prince of Eckmuhl, made at the extremities of our right, clearly proved that the decisive combat was about to commence. The armies were in sight of each other, the cannoneers at their pieces, and all awaited in anxious silence the signal of attack. At length (7th September), at six o'clock precisely, the firing of a cannon from our principal battery announced that we were engaged*. One hundred and twenty pieces of artillery placed on our right answered to the signal. General Pernetti placed himself at the head of the division of Compans, with a battery of thirty pieces, and forcing his way through the wood, turned the entrenchments of the enemy. At half past six General Compans was wounded, and at seven the Prince of Eckmuhl had his horse killed under him. The Duke of Elchingen likewise advanced, and protected by sixty cannon which General Fouché had placed in battery on the pre-

* See the plan of the field of battle.

Digitized by Google

ceding evening, attacked the centre of the Russian army. He was supported by the cavalry of General Latour-Maubourg, who vigorously charged the masses of the enemy, who were formed into squares around the grand redoubts. At the same time the division of Delzons marched upon the village of Borodino to which the enemy had already set fire. Our troops immediately crossed the rivulet, arrived at the village, and carried it at the point of the bayonet. Orders had been given that they should confine themselves to the occupation of this position; but, carried away by the enthusiasm natural to Frenchmen, they passed the river Kologha, and took possession of one of the bridges which connected the village with the eminence. General Plausanne, wishing to moderate the ardour of the soldiers of the 106th, hastily ran to the bridge to recall them, when a ball struck him in the middle of his body. On this occasion the bravery of the 92d regiment deserves the highest praise. Seeing that the 106th had ventured too far, it crossed the bridge of Borodino, and hastened to the succour of that regiment, which inevitably without its aid must have been destroyed.

While the division of Delzons possessed itself of Borodino, that of Broussier, crossing the Kologha under the eminence, lodged itself in a ravine near the principal redoubt, whence the

Digitized by Google

enemy poured a horrible fire. The Viceroy, in addition to his own corps, had now under his orders the divisions of Gerard and Morand, forming the first and third of the first corps. At eight o'clock Morand's division, which had been already engaged, and formed the right extreme of the fourth corps, was warmly attacked at the moment that it was preparing to march upon the redoubt, a movement which ought to have been immediately seconded by Gerard's division. Nevertheless while General Morand sustained the desperate attacks of the enemy, he detached the 30th regiment upon his left, to take possession of the redoubt. The position was soon carried, our artillery crowned the heights, and seized the advantage which for more than two hours the Russians had had over us. The guns, to whose destructive fire we had been so long exposed, were now turned against the enemy, and the battle was lost to the Russians when they imagined that it was but just begun. Part of their artillery was taken, and the rest retreated to their rear. Prince Kutusoff saw that every thing was lost, yet determined to make one effort more, and to maintain the reputation which he had acquired by the service of half a century, he renewed the combat, and attacked with all his forces the strong positions which had just been carried. Three hundred pieces of cannon arranged on these heights

Digitized by Google

spread devastation and death among his ranks, and his disheartened soldiery perished at the feet of those ramparts which they had themselves raised, and which they regarded as the bulwark of Moscow their venerable and sacred city.

The 30th regiment, attacked on every side, was unable to keep the redoubt which it had carried, not being supported by the third division which was scarcely yet drawn up in order of battle. This gallant regiment, commanded by General Bonami, was therefore constrained to yield to the superior force which overwhelmed it, and rejoined its division with the loss of its general. That division, with General Gerard's, continued to maintain itself on the hill, and to withstand the utmost efforts of the Russians.

The enemy, encouraged by the success he had just obtained, brought forward his reserve, with the hope of striking a decisive blow. It was partly composed of the imperial guard. Having concentrated all his forces, he attacked our centre, on which our right had now wheeled. For a moment we feared that our lines would have been broken, and that we should have lost the redoubt we had gained the preceding evening; but General Friant coming up with twenty-four pieces of cannon arrested their progress, mowing down whole ranks at a time, who continued two hours exposed to a fire of grape-shot, neither daring to

Digitized by Google

advance nor willing to retreat. While they remained in this uncertainty, the King of Naples profited by it to snatch from them a victory which they had considered as their own. He ordered the cavalry of General Latour Maubourg to charge, who penetrated by the openings which the grape-shot had made in the squares of the Russians, and in the squadrons of their cuirassiers. Disconcerted by a manœuvre so bold, they gave way, and dispersed themselves in every direction.

The Viceroy seized this decisive moment, and, flying to the right, ordered a simultaneous attack of the grand redoubt by the first, third, and fourteenth divisions. Having arranged all three in order of battle, the troops advanced with cool intrepidity. They approached the very intrenchments of the enemy, when a sudden discharge of grape-shot from the whole of the Russian artillery spread destruction and consternation through our ranks. Our troops were staggered at this fatal reception; but the Prince knew how to reanimate their courage by calling to the recollection of each regiment the circumstances in which it had formerly covered itself with glory. To one he said, "Preserve that valour which has "gained you the title of Invincible;" to another, "Remember, your reputation depends on this "day;" then, turning towards the 9th of the

Digitized by Google

line, he said to them with emotion, "Brave soldiers, remember you were with me at Wagram, "when we broke the enemy's centre." By these words, and still more by his example, he so inflamed the ardour of his troops, that shouting with joy, they again marched with eagerness to the redoubt. His highness riding along the line, arranged the attack with the utmost coolness, and led it himself at the head of Broussier's division, while General Nansouty, at the head of the first division of the heavy cavalry of General Saint-Germain, vigorously charged the squadrons of the enemy which were at the right of the redoubt, and cleared the plain as far as a ruined village. The brigade of carabiniers under the orders of Generals Paultre and Chouard, put to flight all that opposed it, and with the chasseurs of General Pajol covered themselves with glory.

At this instant a division of cuirassiers, from the centre of the army rushed on the redoubt, and offered to our astonished sight a grand and sublime spectacle*... The whole eminence which overhung us appeared in an instant a mass of moving iron: the glitter of the arms, and the rays of the sun, reflected from the helmets and cuirasses of the dragoons, mingled with the flames of the cannon that on every side vomited

* See the plan of the field of battle.

Digitized by Google

forth death, gave to the redoubt the appearance of a volcano in the midst of the army.

The enemy's infantry, placed near this point, behind a ravine, kept up so destructive a fire on our cuirassiers, that they were obliged immediately to retire. Our infantry took their place. They were supported by the third corps of cavalry commanded by Generals Chastel, Thiry, and Doumanget, who charged and overthrew every thing which it found in its way. The aides-de-camp Carbonel, Turenne, and Grammont, were wounded at the side of Count Grouchy. The General himself was struck soon afterwards; but the redoubt was ours. In forcing the intrenchments, our troops made a horrible massacre of the Russians, whose efforts to retain the redoubt rivalled ours to carry it.

In spite of the enemy's tremendous fire, the Viceroy and his staff remained at the head of Broussier's division, followed by the 18th and 30th regiments, and rushing on the redoubt, entered it by the breast-work, and massacred on their pieces the cannoneers that served them. Prince Kutusoff, astonished at this attack, immediately ordered the cuirassiers of the guard to advance and endeavour to retake the position. These were the best of their cavalry. The shock between their cuirassiers and ours was therefore terrible; and one may judge of the fury with

Digitized by Google

which both parties fought, when the enemy, in quitting the field, left it completely covered with dead. In the midst of this frightful encounter, ever glorious for the staff of the fourth corps, the young Saint Marcelin de Fontaines was wounded. He was one of the first who entered the redoubt, and received a stroke from a sabre on the nape of the neck. This wound procured him the cross of the legion of honour bestowed on the field of battle; a recompense the more flattering to him, as he was only old enough to entertain the expectation of meriting it at some future period.

The interior of the redoubt presented a horrid spectacle. The dead were heaped on one another. The feeble cries of the wounded were scarcely heard amid the surrounding tumult. Arms of every description were scattered over the field of battle. The parapets half demolished had their embrasures entirely destroyed. Their places were distinguished only by the cannon, the greatest part of which were dismounted and separated from the broken carriages. In the midst of this scene of carnage, I discovered the body of a Russian cannoneer decorated with three crosses. In one hand he held a broken sword, and with the other firmly grasped the carriage of the gun at which he had so valiantly fought.

All the Russian soldiers in the redoubt chose rather to perish than to yield. The general who

Digitized by Google

commanded them, would have shared their fate if his valour had not saved his life. This brave soldier had sworn to die at his post, and he would have kept his oath. Seeing all his companions dead around him, he endeavoured to precipitate himself on our swords, and he would have inevitably met his death, had not the honour of taking such a prisoner arrested the cruelty of the soldiers. The Viceroy received him with kindness, and committed him to the care of Colonel Asselin, to conduct him to the Emperor, who during the whole of this memorable day remained constantly in the rear of the centre, and executed some grand manœuvres with the first corps and the Poles on the extremity of the right. The Prince of Eckmuhl (Davoust), by turning the Russians at this point, was of material service to the Duke of Elchingen (Ney) in the bloody and reiterated attacks which he made with the third corps to force the centre of the enemy.

Bagration obstinately resisted all our attempts on the left of the Russians, and reinforced by the grenadiers of the divisions of Strogonoff and Woronsow, drove back the Poles with considerable loss: but the Duke of Elchingen (Ney) having strongly supported them with the Westphalians, they were enabled again to resume the offensive. That marshal uniting the division of Ledru with those of Morand and Gerard, at-

Digitized by Google

tacked the enemy at the same time with the Prince Eugene, and penetrated into the very centre of the Russian lines, having in his front numerous batteries, which carried terror and destruction through the enemy's ranks. This intrepidity ensured us the victory, and gained the Duke of Elchingen a reputation for talent and courage, which will immortalize him.

The Viceroy's attention had been entirely taken up by the centre, when it was recalled to his left by a grand movement of cavalry directed by the enemy on that point. General Delzons, who since the morning had been menaced by this cavalry, formed his first brigade into a square* on the left of Borodino. Several times he was on the point of being attacked; but the enemy seeing that no impression could be made on him, advanced to the extremity of our left, and commenced a brisk attack on our light cavalry commanded by Count Ornano, which were for a moment thrown into disorder. The Prince, who happened to be on the spot, threw himself into the middle of a square formed by the 84th, and prepared to set it in motion, when the cossacks were in their turn repulsed, and taking to flight, disengaged our left. Every thing was then restored to the greatest order.

* See the plan of the field of battle.

Digitized by Google

The Prince was found at all points, exhorting every officer to do his duty, and reminding him, that on this day depended the glory of France. He was seen at all the batteries, causing them to advance in proportion as the enemy gave way; and, braving every peril, he himself instructed the cannoneers how to direct their fire. His aide-de-camp, Maurice Mejean, who had been present at every post of danger from the beginning of the day, now received a wound in the thigh; while General Gifflenga and the equerry Bellisomi had their horses killed under them. His highness had at one time placed himself on the parapet of the grand redoubt, surrounded by his officers, and thence remarked from the embrasures all the movements of the enemy, paying no attention to the bullets which frequently whistled near him. Among the persons who composed his suite was Colonel de Bourmont, whose great merit was only equalled by his rare modesty. He had dismounted with the other officers, and was leaning on the pommel of his saddle, when General Guilleminot letting a paper fall, the colonel stooped to pick it up. That motion saved his life, for at that very instant a cannon-ball passed through the breast of his horse.

Although we had taken two redoubts, the enemy had still a third, situated on another eminence, and separated by a ravine. Thence served,

Digitized by Google

they kept up an incessant fire on our regiments, some of which were sheltered by a wood, and others were behind the grand redoubt. We remained several hours in this state of inaction, well persuaded that Kutusoff was preparing to retreat. The artillery alone vomited from every side flames and death. At this period General Houard was killed by a grape-shot, while commanding the second brigade of the thirteenth division. He was companion in arms to General Plausanne, and they perished on the same day. United in their lives, they were not separated in death; for they were both interred on that field which had witnessed their gallantry.

For more than ten hours we had sustained with intrepidity the attacks of the enemy, and although the battle was not yet concluded, there was not a corps that had not to lament the death of one or more of its chiefs. I should make too long a digression from my subject were I to enumerate all the generals who purchased with their lives the success of this bloody day; but there were some, who by their courage and their virtue had gained the esteem of all the army. They excited that universal regard which brave men alone can inspire. They were the subject of general observation and applause while living, and the circumstances of their death will be read with the liveliest interest. Among these I ought to in-

Digitized by Google

clude General Augustus Caulincourt, who was killed as he entered the grand redoubt at the head of the 5th cuirassiers. Cut down in the flower of his age, he had witnessed more combats than years. To the valour of a soldier he united the politeness of the gentleman, and was richly endowed with all the qualities and all the virtues that should characterise the French warrior. Besides Generals Plausanne and Honard, of whom I have just now spoken, we were deprived of the services of the Generals of Brigade Compere and Marion, as well as General Count Lepel, aide-de-camp to the King of Westphalia; nor should we omit the just tribute of respect due to the memory of the intrepid Montbrun. His undaunted bravery had long inspired us with a melancholy presentiment that such a warrior must necessarily perish on the field of battle. A worthy successor of General Lassale, he died like him; and like him he was an honour to our light cavalry. The number of generals wounded amounted to thirty, among whom were the Generals in Chief Grouchy, Nansouty, and Latour Maubourg, and the Generals of Division Friant, Rapp, Compans, Dessaix, Lahoussage, &c.

The Russians lost about 40,000 men, and 50 generals killed or wounded. Among the last were the Princes Bagration (who died a few days afterwards), and Charles of Mecklenbourg, and

Digitized by Google

the Generals Tutschkoff, who commanded the fourth Russian corps, Rajewski Gotschakoff, Kanoviritzin, Gregoff, Woronsow, Krapowilski, and the two Boehmetieffs*.

Although the victory was ours, the cannon roared with unabated fury, and continued to overwhelm new victims. The Viceroy, ever indefatigable and unmindful of danger, was on every part of the field of battle, exposed to a shower of grape-shot and bullets. The firing still continued, and in the evening it was so briskly maintained, that the legion of the Vistula, commanded by General Claparède, was forced to kneel down behind the grand redoubt. We remained more than an hour in this uncomfortable position, when the Prince of Neufchatel (Berthier) coming up, had an interview with the Viceroy which lasted till near dark. Their conference being ended, Prince Eugene issued different orders to his divisions, and the firing ceased. The enemy was then more quiet, and only fired a few shot at intervals, while the silence of the last

* The numbers of the two armies were nearly equal, about 130,000 men. The loss of the French amounted to upwards of 50,000 men; that of the Russians, who occupied an intrenched position, was 32,000. The French fired 90,000 cannon, and the soldiers who had been supplied with 100 cartridges each, expended them all. 60,000 men, and 25,000 horses were either burnt or buried on the field of battle. *Translator's note.*

Digitized by Google

redoubt, gave us reason to believe that the Russians were preparing to retreat on the road to Mojaïsk.

The weather, which had been very fine during the day, became towards evening cold and damp. The whole army bivouacked on the ground it had gained. This encampment was most cruel: neither men nor horses had any thing to eat, and the want of food exposed us to all the rigour of a cold frosty night.

The next day (8th September) we returned, at an early hour, to the field of battle*. What was predicted the preceding evening had actually taken place. The enemy, seeing the intrepidity with which we carried their redoubts, despaired

---

* Labaume had just before told us, that "the whole army "bivouacked on the ground it had gained." He now says, "The next day we returned, at an early hour, to the field of "battle." This seeming inconsistency is easily reconciled, by referring to the plan of the batttle, where it appears, that though the troops did bivouack on the ground which they had gained, the Viceroy, to whose staff Labaume was attached, re-crossed the river, and encamped at a considerable distance. The simple fact appears to be, that after a combat of unequalled fury, no very decided advantage was gained by either party. The Russian right wing maintained its position, and the left wing lost very little ground. That little ground was however occupied by the French, on the night succeeding to the combat, and during that night the Russians retreated in the greatest order. *Translator's note.*

Digitized by Google

of maintaining their position, and resolved to evacuate it during the night. As we passed over the ground which they had occupied, we were enabled to judge of the immense loss that the Russians had sustained. In the space of a square league, almost every spot was covered with the killed or wounded. On many places the bursting of the shells had promiscuously heaped together men and horses. The fire of our howitzers had been so destructive that mountains of dead bodies were scattered over the plain; and the few places that were not encumbered with the slain, were covered with broken lances, muskets, helmets, and cuirasses, or with grape-shot and bullets, as numerous as hailstones after a violent storm. But the most horrid spectacle was the interior of the ravines; almost all the wounded who were able to drag themselves along, had taken refuge there to avoid the shot. These miserable wretches, heaped one upon another, and almost suffocated with blood, uttering the most dreadful groans, and invoking Death with piercing cries, eagerly besought us to put an end to their torments. We had no means to relieve them, and could only deplore the calamities inseparable from a war so atrocious.

While the cavalry pursued the enemy, the Viceroy ordered his engineers to destroy the

Digitized by Google

redoubt: and, as the fourth corps remained encamped on the field of battle, it was presumed we should pass the night there. His highness had also ordered his suite to establish themselves in the church of Borodino, the only building that had escaped the flames; but it was filled with the wounded, and the surgeons were employed in dressing and amputating. The staff of the Prince then proceeding to establish their quarters in the village of Novoe, on the banks of the Kologha, near the road to Mojaïsk, were on the point of entering the castle, when some parties of cossacks obliged them precipitately to retreat.

In the meantime the Viceroy being informed that the fifteenth division had at length returned from Witepsk, and rejoined their corps, received orders to advance. Being arrived at the village below which was the redoubt abandoned by the enemy, we left the high road of Mojaïsk, which was pursued by the centre corps on our right, and marched along the Kologha. We were convinced in this march that it would have been impossible to have turned the right of the Russians on the preceding evening. They had not only many bodies of reserve on that side, but likewise several masked batteries along the river. Within half a league of the village of Krasnoë, we found

Digitized by Google

four other great redoubts in the form of a square, which defended the road, at the right of the intrenched camp of Borodino.

Quitting the field of battle, we left a detachment of all the stragglers that could be collected, under the command of Colonel Bourmont, with orders to defend the position. He very skilfully accomplished this difficult task, and after destroying the enemy's works, rejoined us in a few days. During this time he lived in the midst of the dead and the dying, and was obliged to procure his provisions at a distance of more than five leagues.

The *château* of Krasnoë, and the village of the same name, are situated near the Moskwa. The following morning we crossed this river, and prepared to attack Mojaïsk by the left bank; but the Viceroy with his escort advanced only to the suburbs. Here we saw this unhappy town enveloped in flames. The inhabitants had fled, and our dragoons made only a few prisoners who were found in the houses on this side of the river. Several batteries established on an eminence beyond Mojaïsk, proved to us that we were masters of it. In effect we learned that Napoleon had taken it after an obstinate engagement, and that the enemy in burning the town had not abandoned it without making a brave defence, leaving

Digitized by Google

the streets and squares filled with the dead and the dying.

Our staff examined the environs of Mojaïsk, when the fourth corps, moving to the left, followed a high road through a thick wood, beyond which we saw a considerable village, and at a little distance, a larger one called Vedenskoë.

On this delightful spot was a *chateau*, the furniture of which corresponded with the beauty of the exterior; but it was entirely pillaged in an instant, without any other advantage than some thousands of bottles of wine, which were seized by the soldiers.

Pursuing our route through thick underwood and briers, we arrived at a large village, called Vrouinkovo, where we understood the head-quarters were to be established. On entering it, we saw on an eminence at a distance some very neat houses, and four steeples elegantly constructed. We were about to halt in this village where abundance seemed to reign, when it was announced that the fourth corps was to proceed to a town of the name of Rouza, the steeples of which were plainly perceived. When we left Vrouinkovo we met a great number of peasants with carts loaded with their most valuable furniture and property. A sight so new excited our astonishment, and asking Colonel Asselin what

Digitized by Google

could be the reason of this singular assemblage, he answered me as follows:

" In proportion as our armies advanced into " the interior of Russia, the Emperor Alexander, " seconding the wishes of the nobility, and fol- " lowing the example of Spain, endeavoured to " make this a national war. Accordingly the " nobility and the priests have by persuasions and " by bribes induced all the peasants who were " dependent upon them to rise *en masse* against " us. Of the numerous districts which have ad- " hered to this system of defence, that of Rouza has " shewn itself the most zealous. The whole po- " pulation, animated by their seigneur who had " declared himself the chief of the insurrection, " was properly organized, and ready to join the " Russian army, as soon as they should receive " the necessary orders.

" As Rouza was at a distance of five or six " leagues from the high road, the inhabitants " had flattered themselves that we should not " pass through their town, and had conse- " quently remained secure and tranquil. What " was their surprise, or rather their terror," continued the colonel, " when I was sent by the " Viceroy, and presented myself with a dozen " of Bavarian light horse before the town! The " dismayed peasants rushed from their houses, " hastily harnessed their horses to the carts which

Digitized by Google

" you now see, and fled with the utmost precipi-
" tation.

" The men, however, who had been enrolled
" for the levy, collected at the voice of their lord,
" and armed with poles, lances, and scythes,
" assembled in the square, and immediately ad-
" vanced towards us; but this timid populace
" could not resist a few soldiers accustomed to
" battle, and presently took to flight. The chief
" alone evinced more firmness. He awaited us
" on the square, and armed with a poinard,
" menaced all who summoned him to surrender.
" '*How can I survive the dishonour of my coun-*
" '*try?*' cried he, foaming with rage. '*Our*
" '*altars are no more! Our empire is disgraced!*
" '*Take my life, it is odious to me!*' We wished
" to calm him, and endeavoured to wrench his
" poinard from him: but he became more furious,
" and wounded several of our soldiers, who then
" listening only to revenge, killed him with re-
" peated stabs of the bayonet.

" This was scarcely effected when the ad-
" vanced-guard of the fourth corps entered
" Rouza. 'On my reciting what had happened,'
continued the colonel, " they immediately pur-
" sued the peasants who had fled with their
" effects and their cattle. They soon came up
" with them, and those whom you see here are
" part of the fugitives escaped from Rouza. Go

Digitized by Google

"into the town," added he, "and you will see "many more of them."

As we approached the town, we saw a great number of these carts brought back by the dragoons. It was an affecting spectacle to behold these vehicles loaded with children and old people. The heart was pierced with grief to think how soon our soldiers would divide among them the carts and horses which constituted the sole fortune of these disconsolate families.

At length we entered Rouza; and as we advanced to the very centre of the town, we saw in every street, a crowd of soldiers pillaging the houses, unmindful of the cries of the inhabitants, or the tears of the mothers, who, to soften the hearts of the conquerors, presented their children on their knees, bathed in tears, and distractedly wringing their hands, these interesting creatures begged only for their lives, and those of their babes. This rage for plunder was justified in some, who dying with hunger only sought after provisions; but others, under this pretence, pillaged every thing, and even robbed the women and children of the very clothes which covered them.

The Viceroy had arrived several hours with his staff only. He had left the divisions of infantry and the royal guards, who to-day encamped in

Digitized by Google

our rear, between Rouza and Vrouinkovo. Every one, enchanted to find himself in so delightful a town as Rouza, gave himself up to the security, or rather the disorder, which abundance produces after long privations; when suddenly some Bavarian light horse, who had been sent to reconnoitre, returned at full speed reporting that several squadrons of cossacks were advancing towards the town. It would be difficult to describe the sensation produced by this news. The tranquillity that we had enjoyed, contrasted with the imminent danger which now threatened, produced a most sudden transition from the liveliest joy to the deepest despair. "*The cossacks are here!*" cried one; "*There they come!*" cried another, quite aghast. "*What can we oppose to them?*" we asked one another. "*Nothing but some miserable* "*soldiers, come hither to plunder the peasants.*" This was however our only resource. They were immediately assembled in the square, but they were only about sixty in number, and half of them without arms.

The Viceroy, informed of the cause of the alarm, mounted his horse, and ordered his officers to follow him. We hastened out of the town, and entered the plain; but to our surprise, instead of finding several squadrons, we could only perceive about a dozen horsemen, and these at so great a

Digitized by Google

distance that we could scarcely distinguish them. Some Bavarian light horse who were with us advanced to reconnoitre, and reported that they were really cossacks; but by their small number, and timid and cautious march, we were perfectly assured that we had nothing to fear from them.

As these cossacks might however have been detached from a considerable corps, the Prince thought it necessary to confirm the order which he had already given for some troops to advance; but he modified it so far as to content himself with two battalions instead of the whole of the thirteenth division which had at first been ordered. These two battalions encamping before Rouza dissipated our fears. Every one now returned quietly to his lodgings, where a table well served, and excellent wines, made us soon forget the alarm we had experienced.

The following day we remained at Rouza. The Viceroy profited by this repose to make the chief of his staff draw up a circumstantial report of the celebrated battle of the 7th of September, in which the fourth corps had particularly distinguished itself.

While the thirteenth and fourteenth divisions laid before the Emperor their claims on his regard, the fifteenth division, not less deserving than the rest, but deprived of the honour of fighting in the battle of the Moskwa, was likewise

Digitized by Google

justly entitled to distinguished notice in consideration of the numberless hardships which it had undergone in its expedition to Witepsk. This brave division, proceeding constantly through a marshy country, and meeting only with deserted and ravaged villages, was frequently destitute of provisions, and always compelled to bivouac during the night, while every day it made the most painful and harassing marches to attack an enemy, which always fled at its appearance. For nearly twenty days it saw only the fields which we had completely laid waste; and at length, worn out with hunger, weariness, and disease, this unfortunate division, which was worthy of a better fate, could not reach Borodino till the day after the battle. The fatigues that it had endured, and especially the great losses it had sustained, obliged the Viceroy to leave it in reserve. It was the highest proof of esteem which the Prince could bestow, to unite them with the heroes of the royal guards, the greater part of whom had been taken from this division.

On quitting Rouza it was decided that this position, so important on account of the abundance of provisions which were still to be found there, should be maintained. The castle, situated on a small eminence, and surrounded with ditches, afforded a sufficient defence for the garrison, and guarded

Digitized by Google

them against a *coup de main*. This honourable command was given to Captain Maison Neuve, who proved himself worthy of the confidence reposed in him. As long as the position was retained, this brave and intelligent officer rendered himself useful to the army by the skilfulness of his dispositions, and by the ease with which he appeared to comprehend every intention of the enemy.

Digitized by Google

BOOK V.

MOSCOW.

After the battle of the Moskwa, our triumphant army marched in three columns towards the capital of the Russian empire*. Napoleon, impatient to get possession of it, pursued the enemy with his accustomed vigour on the high road of Smolensko; while Prince Poniatowski, at the head of the fifth corps, marched on the right by the way of Kaluga. The Viceroy, commanding the fourth corps, continued on the left flank, and taking the road of Zwenighorod, proceeded towards Moscow, where the whole army was to assemble.

We could judge of the consternation that reigned in this capital by the terror with which we inspired

* It did not however advance with the rapidity of a triumphant army. The distance between Borodino and Moscow is 75 miles, and the French did not enter the Russian capital, till nine days after the battle. *Translator's Note.*

Digitized by Google

the country people. Our arrival in Rouza (9th of September), and the cruel manner in which we had treated the inhabitants, were no sooner known, than all the villages on the road to Moscow were instantly abandoned. The country presented one uniform scene of horrible desolation, for most of those who fled, abandoned themselves to despair, burnt their houses, their *chateaux*, and the grain and forage which were scarcely gathered. These unhappy beings, terrified by the fatal and useless resistance of the inhabitants of Rouza, threw away the pikes with which they had been armed, and swiftly fled to conceal their wives and their little ones in the thick forests at a distance from our route.

On approaching Moscow, we had hoped that civilization, which enervates the soul, and especially an attachment to property, so natural to the inhabitants of large towns, would have induced the people not to quit their habitations. We were convinced that the rapacity of our soldiers was principally excited by the deserted state in which we found the villages. But the country around Moscow does not belong to the inhabitants of that beautiful city; it was the property of the lords who had declared against us, and their peasants, equally enslaved and oppressed with those of the Dnieper and the Volga, obeyed the orders of their masters. They had been en-

Digitized by Google

joined, on pain of death, to fly at our approach, and to hide in the woods whatever could be useful to us.

We perceived the execution of this fatal measure on entering the village of Apalchtchouina. The houses deserted, the castle abandoned, the furniture dashed to pieces, and the provisions destroyed, presented a spactacle of the most frightful desolation. All these ravages shewed us what sacrifices a people sufficiently magnanimous to prefer independence to riches will cheerfully make.

Near Karinskoé, a village half way towards Zwenighorod whither we were marching, the cossacks appeared. According to their custom, they made no stand against our advanced-guard, but contented themselves with observing us, by marching on an eminence at our left parallel with the high road. On the summit of this height, and in the midst of a thick wood of birch, rose the grey walls and the steeples of an ancient abbey. At the foot of the hill stood the little town of Zwenighorod built on the banks of the Moskwa. On this point the cossacks formed themselves into several bodies, and skirmished for some time with our light troops, but they were gradually dislodged from their ambuscades, and we took post around Zwenighorod.

The abbey situated above this little town, com-

Digitized by Google

mands the course of the Moskwa. Its embattled walls, more than twenty feet in height, and between five and six feet thick, are flanked by four great towers with embrasures. This edifice, constructed in the thirteenth or fourteenth century, reminds us of the times when the Moscovites, filled with veneration for their priests, suffered the sacerdotal authority to take precedence of that of the nobles; and when, on days of ceremony, the Czar marched before the patriarch of Moscow, holding the bridle of his horse. But these monks, so powerful and so formidable before the time of Peter I., were brought back again to the simplicity of the apostles by this great monarch, who, when he founded his empire, confiscated their property and diminished their number.

To conceive a proper idea of the changes produced by this reform, it was sufficient to enter the abbey of Zwenighorod. At first sight of its lofty towers and enormous walls, we supposed that the interior contained an agreeable and commodious residence, and that we should find among these monks the wonted abundance of all richly-endowed abbeys. A large iron gate strongly barricadoed confirmed us in the persuasion that this convent was well supplied with every thing that our soldiers needed. We were about to force the entry, when an old man, whose flowing beard was whiter than his robe, came to admit us. He

Digitized by Google

was desired to conduct us to the abbot. On entering the court we were much surprised at finding how little this vast edifice corresponded with the high opinion we had conceived of it; and that our guide, instead of introducing us into the apartments of the superior, conducted us to a small chapel, where we saw four monks prostrate at the foot of an altar constructed in the Grecian style. These venerable old men threw themselves at our feet, and embracing our knees, entreated, in the name of the God whom they adored, that we would respect their church, and the graves of the bishops of which they were the faithful guardians. "You may judge by our miserable appear-"ance," they addressed us by means of an interpreter, "that we can have no hidden treasures, "and our food is so coarse, that many of your "soldiers would scorn to eat it. We have no "other possessions than our relics and our altars. "Deign to respect them from a reverence for a "religion so similar to your own." This we promised, and our assurance was confirmed on the arrival of the Viceroy, who established his head-quarters in the abbey, and thereby preserved the church and convent from the pillage with which they were threatened.

While this asylum, formerly so peaceful, was a prey to the tumult unavoidable on such occasions, I perceived one of these pious monks con-

Digitized by Google

cealing himself in a cell almost under ground, the simplicity of which presented nothing to excite our avarice. I addressed him, and promised to protect him. Grateful for my attentions, he rewarded them by acknowledging that he spoke French, and that he wished to have the pleasure of conversing with me. I was charmed with his candour, and profited by it, to inform myself of every thing relating to the sentiments and character of a people from whom we had conquered more than two hundred and fifty leagues of territory, without becoming acquainted with them. When I mentioned Moscow, he told me that it was the place of his nativity, and I perceived that deep sighs interrupted his speech. I judged by his silent grief that he mourned over the misfortunes to which this great capital would soon be exposed. I sympathized with him; but anxious to know the state of affairs in that city at which we should so soon arrive, I ventured at length to ask him concerning it.

"The French have entered the territory of "Russia with immense force," said this venerable monk; "they come to ravage our beloved coun- "try, and they advance even to the sacred city— "the centre of our empire, and the source of our "prosperity. Unacquainted with our manners "and our character, they think that we shall bend "under their yoke, and that compelled to choose

Digitized by Google

" between our homes and independence, we shall,
" like many others, submit to their dominion, and
" renounce that national pride in which consists
" the true power of a people. No, Napoleon is
" mistaken. We are too wise not to abhor his
" tyranny; and we are not sufficiently corrupted
" to prefer slavery to liberty. In vain he hopes
" to force us by his numberless armies to sue for
" peace. He does not remember that the popu-
" lation of Russia is at the absolute control of the
" nobility. Our seigneurs, able at their pleasure
" to cause whole districts to emigrate, will order
" their peasants to fly into the deserts at the ap-
" proach of the invader, or, if necessary, will
" destroy every town and village, rather than
" give them up to a true barbarian, whose tyranny
" is more dreadful to us than death itself.

" We are aware too," added he, " that Napo-
" leon relies much on the dissensions which used
" formerly to exist between the monarch and
" the nobles; but the love of our country has
" stifled every ancient feud. He flatters himself
" likewise, that he will be able to arm the people
" against the great. Vain efforts! the people
" are superstitiously obedient to their masters;
" nor will they confide in the deceitful promises
" of him who burns their cottages, murders their
" children, devastates their country, and subverts
" their temples. Besides, has not the whole of

Digitized by Google

"Europe witnessed the most striking instances of "his perfidy? Is he not the scourge of Germany, "of which he professed to be the protector? "Spain too, having trusted to the sincerity of "his alliance, is become one vast burying-place! "The Pontiff who crowned him, and raised him "from a private station to the first throne in the "world, what reward has he received for that "diadem? An ignominious captivity! And even "your own country, which, from the wildest "democracy, has willingly and rapidly passed to "the most absolute despotism, what advantages "does she derive from her submission? Incessant new taxes to maintain a crowd of worthless "courtiers, or to gratify the luxury of a family "insatiable in their pleasures. In addition to "this, you have proscriptions and secret executions without number. Your very thoughts "are fettered, and whole generations are destroyed. In truth, your mothers have often been "reduced to the sad necessity of deploring their "fecundity. This," continued the good old man, "this is the situation in which your tyrant has placed you; a tyrant who is the more "vain and odious, because he sprung from an "obscure family; and who formerly having "scarcely one domestic to serve him, is now desirous that the whole universe should crouch at "his feet, and that even kings should be com-

Digitized by Google

" pelled to wait in his anti-room. If I did not " fear to disgrace the majesty of that monarch " who loves us as we love him, I would draw a " comparison between your emperor and ours,— " but such a comparison would only produce a " shocking contrast, as it would place vice in con- " stant opposition to virtue."

Struck by the energy of this priest, whose strength of mind had suffered nothing by age, I remained silent, and was at the same time charmed with his candour and patriotism. Deeply affected by the confidence with which he had honoured me, I thought I might cast off all reserve, and derive much useful information from his conversation. " As you have just mentioned the " Emperor Alexander," said I to him, " pray tell " me what is become of him? Since we passed " the Wilia we have never heard any thing of " him; and at Witepsk, in a public audience, " Napoleon announced with much satisfaction, " that this monarch had shared at Wiliki-luki the " fate of his father, and had fallen a victim to " the treachery of his courtiers."

" He cannot have much greatness of mind," answered the old man, smiling, " who triumphs at " the death of an enemy. To prove to you however " the falsity of that report, and to shew you how " much harmony exists among all classes at this " critical moment, and how beloved our sove-

Digitized by Google

"reign is, I will read you a letter which was sent "to me from Moscow, a few days after Alexander "had arrived there from the army." At these words he took out the letter, translating it to me as he went on.

"*Moscow, July 27**.

"This day will add new lustre to our annals, "and the remembrance of it will descend to the "remotest posterity, as an eternal testimony of "Russian patriotism and loyalty. It will record "the ardent attachment which our illustrious no- "bility and every class of citizens feel for our "beloved sovereign. After a notification pub- "lished in the evening, the nobility and the mer- "chants assembled at eight o'clock on the fol- "lowing morning, at the palace Slobode, to wait "the arrival of our most gracious Emperor. "Notwithstanding the object of this meeting had "not been communicated, every one was con- "scious of those loyal feelings which the appeal "of the father of his country to his children, in "the capital of his empire, would naturally in- "spire. The silence which reigned in this vast "assembly clearly proved their union, and their

* The translation of this letter having appeared in the French journals, it is given here as it was published in the Moniteur.

Digitized by Google

" disposition to submit to any sacrifice. When " the manifesto of His Imperial Majesty was " read to the nobles, appealing to the nation at " large, and calling on every one to defend his " country against an enemy, ' who, with craft in " ' his heart, and seduction on his lips, was " ' bringing fetters and indissoluble chains for " ' Russia,' the illustrious posterity of the Po- " jarskies, animated by the most ardent zeal, im- " mediately testified their readiness to sacrifice " the whole of their property, and even their " lives. They resolved that levies should be " made in the government of Moscow to form an " army of the interior, consisting of ten men out " of every hundred, who should be armed to the " utmost of their ability, and provided with " clothing and pay. The manifesto being after- " wards read in the assembly of the merchants, " this body, animated by the general zeal, re- " solved that a sum of money should be levied " on each of them, proportionate to their re- " spective capitals, to defray the expense of the " army of the interior. Not satisfied with this, " the greater part of them were desirous of " making further sacrifices. They demanded " permission to open a voluntary subscription " for that purpose, and in less than an hour, the " sum subscribed amounted to more than one " million and a half of roubles.

Digitized by Google

" Such was the disposition of these two bodies, " when His Majesty, who had attended divine " service at the church of the palace, appeared " among the nobles. After assuring them, in a " short speech, that he considered the zeal of " the nobility as the firmest support of his " throne, and, acknowledging that they had at " all times, and under all circumstances, shewn " themselves the guardians and faithful de- " fenders of the integrity and glory of their be- " loved country, he condescended to give them " a brief sketch of the state of military affairs, " which then required extraordinary measures " of defence. When he heard of the unanimous " decision of the two bodies, who had resolved " to furnish, to clothe, and to arm, at their own " expense, eighty thousand men for the defence " of Moscow, he received this new proof of at- " tachment to his person and of love to the coun- " try, with the feelings of a father who loves his " children, and who is proud of their courage. " Yielding to the emotions which overpowered " him, he exclaimed, ' I did not expect less, you " ' have fully confirmed my opinion of you.'

" Afterwards his Imperial Majesty conde- " scended to proceed to the saloon where the " merchants were assembled, and being in- " formed of the zeal they had shewn both in the " resolution of levying a sum on the whole body,

Digitized by Google

" and making an extraordinary voluntary sub-
" scription of a million and a half of roubles, he
" expressed his gracious satisfaction in terms
" dictated by wisdom itself. His speech was
" followed by the general exclamation of ' We
" ' are ready to sacrifice for our father, not only
" ' our fortunes, but our lives.' These were the
" words of the descendants of the immortal
" Minin. The scene of that morning requires
" the pen of a new Tacitus; while the pencil of
" a second Apelles alone would do justice to the
" picture which represented the monarch and
" the father, his countenance beaming wisdom
" and benevolence, receiving from his children
" who thronged around him, the sacrifices which
" they were offering on the altar of their country.

" May our enemy be informed of this! May
" that proud man, who sports with the fate of
" his subjects, learn it and tremble! We shall
" all march against him. We are guided by
" religion, and by loyalty for our sovereign and
" country. We will conquer, or perish toge-
" ther."

After having read this letter, the pious friar informed me that the Patriarch Platon, Archbishop of Moscow, notwithstanding his advanced and decrepid age, watched still in the spirit and in prayer for the welfare of his sovereign and the empire, and that he had just sent to his Imperial

Digitized by Google

Majesty the precious image of Saint Serge, Bishop of Radouègue. The monarch, added he, accepted this sacred relic, and presented it to the army of Moscow, hoping that it would be safe under the protection of this saint, who once by his benediction shielded the victorious *Dmitri Douskoï* in his combat against the cruel *Mamaï*.

This is the letter of his Eminency Platon, dated from the Abbey Troitsa*, July 26th.

" Moscow, the capital of the empire of the " new Jerusalem, receives her Christ like a mo- " ther in the arms of her faithful sons; and per- " ceiving, through the mist which is raised, the " brilliant glory of his power, she sings joyfully " Hosannah, Praised be he who is arrived! Let " the arrogant and shameless Goliath, bring his " mortal terrors from the limits of France, to the " confines of Russia! Peaceful Religion, that " sling of the Russian David, will soon destroy " his sanguinary pride. This image of Saint " Serge, ancient defender of our country's hap- " piness, is offered to your Imperial Majesty's " acceptance."

Astonished at a custom so different from ours, I asked whether it was really true that the Emperor Alexander had given this standard to his soldiers. " I am so certain of it," answered the

* About fifteen leagues distance from Moscow.

Digitized by Google

venerable ecclesiastic, "that it would be sacri-
" legious to doubt it. Letters from Moscow have
" since informed us, that Bishop Augustin, vicar
" of that capital, having assembled all the troops
" in the town*, chanted a *Te Deum*, and pre-
" senting them with the image of Saint Serge,
" pronounced a discourse which dissolved the
" whole congregation in tears. We have seen
" these troops passing under the walls of our
" abbey, in their way to the battle of the Moskwa,
" and carrying with veneration that sacred stand-
" ard. They marched to the combat like true
" Christian soldiers, devoted to their religion,
" their country, and their Prince. These senti-
" ments were expressed in their countenances;
" a celestial joy beamed from their eyes at the
" thought of combating the enemy. Every war-
" rior, even he who had but just entered the
" service, glowed with the ardour of the most
" experienced veteran, and shewed that unli-
" mited submission to his chiefs, and observed
" that strict discipline, which is the duty and the
" surest sign of a good soldier. The country
" people, who saw them pass, earnestly im-
" plored the protection of Heaven on these brave

* Saturday, August 17th, or, according to our calendar, August 29th, which, as is well known, anticipates the Russian calendar by twelve days.

Digitized by Google

" men who proceeded from the ancient capital of " Russia, that city, which in former times had " with her own forces laid the insolent enemy in " the dust, who presumptuously came to de- " stroy it.

" Alas! Fortune has not been propitious to " them. You have conquered them at Borodino, " and from that day terror and consternation have " spread through the whole country. The roads " are crowded with fugitives who seek an asylum " on the frontiers of Asia. We alone remain. " You may imagine how great was our fear, when " your arrival was announced to us last night by " the fires of your bivouacks which covered the " neighbouring hills, and especially by the burn- " ing of the villages, the flames of which illu- " mined the horizon."

Filled with admiration at the extraordinary things which this good old man had communicated to me, I felt the deepest respect for a nation so great even in its misfortunes; and I said to myself, " That people must be invincible, who, " firm to their principles, shrink not at the ap- " proach of danger, and stake their own pre- " servation on that of their religion and their " laws."

Early on the following morning we quitted the abbey. As I retired from it I looked behind and saw the first rays of the rising sun gilding the

Digitized by Google

summit of those lofty walls, which had been erected as the asylum of peace, but which, after our departure, became a prey to undisciplined brigands. I ruminated on these painful ideas, and taking a road parallel with the Moskwa, I observed that bridges had been erected opposite to Zwenighorod to open a communication with the grand army, which marched towards Moscow on the opposite bank.

We followed the course of the Moskwa, when the cossacks again appeared manœuvring in the same manner as on the former evening. They attempted to stop the Bavarian light horse near Aksinino; but some of their men being wounded, they fled in disorder, and retired beyond the Moskwa, which we crossed below the village of Spaskoë. The river was shallow at that point, and both men and horses easily effected a passage. The cossacks, who waited for us at the entrance of a wood, dispersed when they saw that the barrier which separated them from us had been overstepped. Thence we pursued our march as far as Buzaïevo, where the post-house alone remained, and a castle on a very steep eminence, surrounded by woods, in which Prince Eugene lodged.

Being anxious to arrive at Moscow, we commenced our march at an early hour on the following morning (September 14th), and passed through

Digitized by Google

several deserted villages. On the banks of the Moskwa, towards our right, were some magnificent *chateaux*, which the Tartars had pillaged to deprive us of every comfort which these places could afford. The corn, ready for harvest, had either been trodden down, or eaten by the horses. The hay-stacks which covered the country were given to the flames, and spread all around an impenetrable smoke. When we at length reached the village of Tschérepkova, and our cavalry continued their march, the Viceroy ascended an eminence on our right, and long examined whether Moscow, the object of all our wishes, could be seen; for we regarded it as the end of our fatigues, and the termination of our expedition. Several hills yet concealing it from our view, we perceived nothing but clouds of dust, which, rising parallel with our march, indicated the route that the grand army had pursued. A few cannon-shots, fired at a distance, and with long intervals, disposed us to believe that our troops were approaching Moscow without experiencing much resistance.

As we descended from the eminence, we suddenly heard the most dreadful cries. A troop of cossacks, issuing from a neighbouring wood, had in their accustomed manner rushed upon our chasseurs, and endeavoured to stop the march of our van-guard. But our brave fellows, far from

Digitized by Google

being intimidated by this unexpected attack, quickly repelled those vain efforts by which an undisciplined horde strove to impede our entrance into the capital. These were the last struggles of a desperate courage, and the Russians, beaten and dispersed, were compelled to fly under the walls of the Kremlin, as they had before done on the banks of the Kologha.

We distinguished at a distance, and amidst the dust, long columns of Russian cavalry, all marching towards Moscow, and all retiring behind the town, as soon as we approached it. While the fourth corps was constructing a bridge across the Moskwa, the staff established itself on a lofty hill, about two o'clock, whence we perceived a thousand elegant and gilded spires, which, glittering in the rays of the sun, seemed at a distance, like so many globes of fire. One of these globes, which surmounted a pillar, or obelisk, bore the appearance of an enormous balloon, suspended in the air. Transported with delight at this beautiful spectacle, which was the more gratifying from the remembrance of the melancholy objects which we had hitherto seen, we could not suppress our joy; but, with a simultaneous movement, we all exclaimed, *Moscow! Moscow!* At the sound of this long wished-for name, the soldiers rushed up the hill in crowds, discovering new wonders at every step. One admired a noble

Digitized by Google

château on our left, the elegant architecture of which displayed more than eastern magnificence; another directed his attention towards a palace or a temple; but all were struck with the superb picture which this immense town afforded. It is situated in the midst of a fertile plain. The Moskwa is seen meandering through the richest meadows, and after having fertilized the neighbouring country, takes its course through the middle of the town, separating into different groups an immense collection of houses, built of wood, stone, and bricks, constructed in a style partaking of the Gothic and modern architecture, and in which, indeed, the architecture of every different nation is strangely mingled. The walls variously painted, the domes covered with lead or slates, or glittering with gold, offered the most pleasing variety; whilst the porticos before the palaces, the obelisks over the gates, and, especially, the innumerable steeples, actually presented to our eyes one of those celebrated cities of Asia, which we had thought had only existed in the creative imagination of the Arabian poets.

We were contemplating this noble spectacle, when we saw a well-dressed man coming towards us through a bye-way from Moscow. Several of our soldiers immediately ran to meet him, and viewing him with suspicion, were disposed to make him pay dearly for his imprudent curiosity: but

Digitized by Google

the calmness with which he addressed us, the fluency with which he spoke our language, and, above, all our impatience to hear some tidings from Moscow, caused us all to listen to him with pleasure and interest.

"I am not come," said he, "to observe your "manœuvres, nor to mislead you by false infor- "mation. I am an unfortunate merchant, ig- "norant of every thing that relates to war; "and, notwithstanding I am the victim, I have "never inquired into the motives which induced "our sovereigns to engage in this fatal contest. "Your Emperor entered Moscow at the head of "his invincible legions to-day about noon, after "having received a herald who besought him to "spare the city*. But he found only a deserted "town. Some wretches, who have escaped from "prison, and some miserable prostitutes, were "the only creatures who interrupted its solitude. "Hasten to stop their excesses ere it be too late. "Liberty has only been granted them, with the "hope, that all the crimes which they may com- "mit, will be attributed to the French army. "Being aware of the misfortunes that threaten

* The Russians, previous to their quitting Moscow, sent a herald to Napoleon, to entreat him to spare the city. They doubtless employed this manœuvre the better to conceal their plan, and to lull us into greater security.

Digitized by Google

"us, I came to find among you some one gene-
"rous enough to protect my family; for, in spite
"of the orders of our government, I cannot con-
"sent to abandon my house, and to lead a wan-
"dering miserable life in the woods. I prefer
"applying to French generosity, and I trust that
"I shall find a protector among those, who have
"been ever represented to us as our most cruel
"enemies. The great men of our empire, de-
"ceived by a savage and destructive policy, will
"doubtless attempt to irritate you, by causing
"the whole population to emigrate, and leaving
"nothing but a deserted city, if, indeed, it is
"not already sacrificed to the flames."

We hastily interrupted him, saying, that it was impossible any people would thus effect their own ruin, from the uncertain hope of involving their enemy in it*.

* It has been clearly ascertained that the destruction of Moscow was the work of the Russians and not of the French. It was a dreadful act of patriotism, dictated by the profoundest policy. The unexpected destruction of the vast magazines which the city contained, rendered the stay of the French during the winter absolutely impossible, and compelled them to retreat at a time when cold and famine would thin their ranks more rapidly than the sword of the enemy. It is said that Buonaparte has acknowledged that all his plans were disconcerted by this unlooked-for evil, and that it was impossible for him to be prepared for it, as it is without a parallel in either ancient or modern times. *Translator's Note.*

Digitized by Google

"It is but too true that such a resolution is "taken," said this unhappy man, "and if you "yet doubt it, know that Count Rastopchin, go- "vernor of Moscow, quitted it yesterday, some "hours before the entry of the French. The "police followed him, taking with them the en- "gines and every thing which could be useful in "arresting the progress of the flames. Before "he departed, he charged the very outcast of "human beings to assist him in his revenge. "How far he will proceed I know not; but I "tremble when I recollect that he has often "threatened to burn Moscow, if the French "should approach it. Such barbarity must seem "atrocious and even incredible to you, if you "are not aware of the deadly hatred with which "your unheard-of victories have inspired our "nobility. They know that the whole of Europe "is under your domination, and, from a senti- "ment of pride, they would destroy their native "country, rather than see it subjugated.

"If the nobility, ashamed of their defeats, had "not meditated the destruction of the capital, "why did they fly with all their property? Why "have the merchants likewise been compelled to "follow them, carrying with them their goods "and their treasures? Why, lastly, have no ma- "gistrates remained in this desolated town, to "implore the mercy of the conqueror? They

Digitized by Google

" have all fled, and thus seem determined to urge
" your soldiers to every excess; for the legal au-
" thorities, the only protection of the citizens, by
" abandoning their posts, have abandoned every
" thing."

This unfortunate Moscovite shed many bitter tears while he thus addressed us. To calm his grief we promised what he requested, and endeavoured to console him by dissipating those fears, too well founded, which the dangers of his unhappy country had excited. We questioned him as to the direction in which the Russians had retreated; what they had done since the battle of the Moskwa, and, lastly, what was become of the Emperor Alexander and his brother Constantine! He answered all our questions in the most satisfactory manner, and confirmed the intelligence which had been already communicated to me by the friar in Zwenighorod. This unhappy man becoming more composed, and being secretly flattered by the agreeable surprise which the sight of Moscow and its environs had caused, consented to my request to give us some account of a city the conquest of which promised to crown all our hopes. He expressed himself as follows:

"Moscow, built in the Asiatic style, has five
" enclosures, one within another.

"The high towers, and the embattled walls,
" which you see rising in the midst of the town,

Digitized by Google

" trace the first enclosure, called the *Kremlin*. " This fortress, in the form of a perfect triangle, " is celebrated in our annals, and has never been " taken*. The plan of it was drawn by some " Italian architects, towards the fourteenth cen- " tury†. The interior of the *Kremlin* is divided " into two parts; the one called *Krepots*, or citadel, " contains only the palace, and some churches, " each of which is surmounted by five domes. " From this place you may perfectly distinguish " them, as much by their elevation as by the " gilding of the steeples and their fantastic ar- " chitecture. In the second enclosure are some " noble houses, commercial streets, and the place " called the Chinese-Town, or *Kitaye-Gorod*, a " name given it by the Tartars, who were its " founders. The Beloye-Gorod, or White-Town, " forms a third circle round the Kitaye-Gorod. " This quarter contains some good houses of " stone; but the Zemlenoye-Gorod has lately sur- " passed it in magnificence. The noblest hotels " are found here. The circumference of the city " including the suburbs is about 30 wersts‡. In

* The people of Moscow believed that the preservation of the empire depended on the towers of this ancient fortress. A false tradition persuaded them that it never had been taken. Thus, to express the idea of security, it was a common saying, *As safe as within the Kremlin.*

† Voltaire's Histoire de Russie, vol. I. p. 50, stereot. edition.

‡ Seven leagues. A degree contains 104½ wersts.

Digitized by Google

" winter the population amounted to 30,000 " souls, but at the approach of summer, when " people retire to their country-houses, this num- " ber is diminished one-third.

" Foedor, the elder brother of Peter the Great, " began to improve Moscow. He constructed " several buildings of stone, but without any re- " gular architecture. To him we owe the first stud " of beautiful horses, and some useful embellish- " ments*. Although Peter had a particular af- " fection for Petersburg, nevertheless his genius, " which embraced every thing, did not neglect " Moscow. He caused it to be paved, adorned " it with many superb edifices, and enriched it " with valuable manufactures; and, lastly, a uni- " versity was established under the auspices of " Elizabeth†.

" The arsenal within the krepots is remark- " able for six culverins mounted on fixed car- " riages, the largest of which is twenty-four feet " in length. Near the principal gate is likewise " an enormous howitzer, at least three feet in di- " ameter. Further on is the ancient palace of " the Czars. It is the residence of our Emperors. " Yours has now established himself there. Be- " hind is the palace of the senate; near which is

---

* Voltaire's Histoire de Russie, vol. I. p. 52.
† *Idem.*

Digitized by Google

" the cathedral of St. Iwan, and the foundation of " an ancient tower, with the famous bell which " was cast in Moscow, towards the middle of the " sixteenth century, under the Czar Boris Godo- " no. It is an astonishing production, and " proves, that even at that remote period, the " Russians had made great progress in civili- " zation and the fine arts. This bell, justly ad- " mired for the beauty of the figures which sur- " round it, surpasses in size the most famous in " Europe*.

" From the krepots you enjoy a delightful " prospect. On the right and left are two bridges, " across the Moskwa, which lead to the suburbs " of Kaluga. Beyond the river are some magni- " ficent palaces; and in the back-ground is a " fine country, embellished with many noble " mansions."

But, said I, interrupting the Moscovite, tell us what immense fabric is this with an infinite number of windows on each side, and which, by its enormous magnitude, seems to command the whole town?

" It is the hospital Sheremitow," answered he, " built by the illustrious family of that name. " One of their ancestors was the glorious com- " panion in arms of Peter the Great; and the

* Voltaire's Histoire de Russie, tom. I. p. 51.

Digitized by Google

" riches which he acquired were always devoted to " the prosperity and glory of the nation. In this " building were educated the orphans and the " children of those who have defended their " country. But at present the children have " been removed beyond the Volga, and their " fathers, more than twenty thousand of whom " were gloriously wounded at Mojaïsk, occupy " their places. These unhappy men are aban- " doned: death is before their eyes; and if your " generosity does not, in this moment of cala- " mity, afford them assistance, they will be left " to die in the most frightful torments.

" From the gate of Petersburg to that of " Kaluga, numerous palaces present themselves, " which, by their riches and magnificence, attract " the attention of the traveller. All these edi- " fices are newly constructed, and announce the " prodigious wealth that Russia has accumulated " within a few years. The most astonishing of " all is the palace of Orlow. It belongs to the " only heiress of this name, whose income ex- " ceeds six millions of roubles*. The extent of " the palace is immense, and the beauty of the " interior corresponds with the spacious courts " and enchanting gardens which surround it.

" You will find in my country," added the

* One million sterling.

Digitized by Google

Moscovite, " a great number of edifices justly " celebrated as the most beautiful in Europe. It " is useless to describe them to you, since you " will soon see them yourselves. I wish that " you may long admire them, but a fatal presen- " timent convinces me, that this great and superb " town, justly considered as the market of Europe " and of Asia, will, ere long, astonish the world " by the most dreadful catastrophe."

As he uttered these words, the unfortunate man seemed suffocated with grief. I pitied him; but I could not leave him without asking the name of a large building of red and white brick, which was seen to the north of the town, on the road to Petersburg. He informed me that it was the famous *chateau* of Peterskoë, where the sovereigns of Russia used to reside previous to their coronation.

Although the bridge over the Moskwa was not yet finished, the Viceroy ordered the troops of his corps to cross the river. The cavalry had already passed it, and had taken post before the village of Khorchévo. We were here officially informed of the entry of our troops into Moscow. The fourth corps received orders to halt at this place till the following day, when an hour would be appointed for us to enter the capital of the Russian empire.

On the 15th of September our corps left the

Digitized by Google

village where it had encamped at an early hour, and marched to Moscow. As we approached the city, we saw that it had no walls, and that a simple parapet of earth was the only work which constituted the outer enclosure. Nothing indicated that the town was inhabited; and the road by which we arrived was so deserted, that we saw neither Russian or even French soldiers. No cry, no noise was heard, in the midst of this awful solitude. We pursued our march, a prey to the utmost anxiety, and that anxiety was redoubled when we perceived a thick smoke, which arose in the form of a column from the centre of the town. It was at first believed that the Russians had, as usual, set fire to some magazines in their retreat; but when we recollected the recital of the inhabitant of Moscow, we feared that his prediction was about to be fulfilled.—Eager to know the cause of this conflagration, we in vain endeavoured to find some one who might satisfy our irrepressible curiosity, and the impossibility of satisfying it, increased our impatience, and augmented our alarm.

We did not enter at the first barrier that presented itself, but, moving to the left, we continued to march round the town. At length, agreeably to the orders of the Viceroy, I placed the troops of the fourth corps in a position to guard the high road towards Petersburg. The thirteenth and

Digitized by Google

fifteenth divisions encamped around the *chateau* of Peterskoë, the fourteenth established itself in the village between Moscow and this *chateau*, and the Bavarian light cavalry was a league in front of the village.

When these positions were taken, the Viceroy entered Moscow, and fixed his head-quarters in the palace of Prince Momonoff, in the beautiful street of St. Petersburg. The quarter assigned to our corps was one of the finest in the town. It was composed entirely of superb edifices, and of houses which, although of wood, had an appearance of surprising grandeur and magnificence. The magistrates having abandoned the town, every one established himself at his pleasure in these sumptuous palaces; even the subaltern officer was lodged in vast apartments richly decorated, and of which he could easily fancy himself to be the proprietor, since no one appeared but an humble and submissive porter, who, with a trembling hand delivered to him the keys of the mansion.

Although Moscow had been entered by some of our troops the preceding day, so extensive and so deserted was the town, that no soldier had yet penetrated into the quarter which we were to occupy. The most intrepid minds were affected by this loneliness. The streets were so long, that our cavalry could not recognize each other from

Digitized by Google

the opposite extremities. The different parties advanced with caution, and then suddenly fled from each other, though they were all enlisted under the same banners. In proportion as a new quarter was occupied, reconnoitring parties were sent forward to examine the palaces and the churches. In the former were found only old men and children, or Russian officers who had been wounded in the preceding engagements: in the latter, the altars were decorated as if for a festival; a thousand lighted tapers, burning in honour of the patron saint of the country, attested that the pious Moscovites had not ceased to invoke him till the moment of their departure. This solemn and religious spectacle rendered the people whom we had conquered, powerful and respectable in our estimation, and filled us with that consternation which is the offspring of injustice. We advanced with fearful steps through this awful solitude, often stopping and looking tremblingly behind us; then, struck with sudden terror, we eagerly listened to every sound; for the imagination, frightened at the very magnitude of our conquest, made us apprehensive of treachery in every place. At the least noise we fancied that we heard the clashing of arms, and the cries of the wounded.

When we approached the centre of the town,

Digitized by Google

and especially in the neighbourhood of the Bazar*, we began to see some inhabitants assembled around the Kremlin. These unhappy beings, deceived by an absurd tradition, had believed that this citadel was impregnable, and had attempted to defend it for an instant against our advanced guard, commanded by the King of Naples; but the valour of our troops instantly dispersed them. Dismayed by their defeat, they contemplated, with tears, those lofty towers which they had hitherto regarded as the *palladium* of their city. Proceeding further on, we saw a crowd of soldiers who exposed to public sale a vast quantity of articles which they had pillaged; for it was only at the grand magazines of provisions that the imperial guards had placed sentinels. Continuing our progress, the number of soldiers multiplied; they were returning in troops, carrying on their backs pieces of cloth, loaves of sugar, and whole bales of merchandise. We knew not how to account for this strange disorder, until some fusileers of the guards informed us that the smoke which we had seen on entering the town, proceeded from a vast building full of goods, called

* A great square enclosed within the Kitaye-Gorod. It is surrounded by galleries built of brick, which contain an infinite number of little shops.

Digitized by Google

the Exchange, and to which the Russians had set fire on their retreat. "Yesterday," said these soldiers, "we entered the city about twelve o'clock, "and early this morning the fire began to appear. "We immediately endeavoured to extinguish it, "believing that it had been occasioned by the im- "prudence of our bivouacks: but we soon desisted "when we learned that the governor had ordered "the city to be destroyed, and had carried away "all the engines, by which alone we could arrest "the progress of the flames. He hoped by this "devastation to destroy the discipline of our "army, and to ruin the merchants who had so "strongly opposed the abandonment of Mos- "cow *."

A natural curiosity made me proceed. As I advanced towards the fire, the avenues were more obstructed by soldiers and beggars carrying off goods of every kind. The less precious articles were despised, and soon thrown away, and the streets were covered with merchandise of every description. I penetrated at length into the interior of the Exchange; but, alas! it was no more the building so renowned for its magnifi-

* Many of our pioneers and other soldiers strenuously endeavoured to subdue the conflagration, by breaking off the communication between the houses; but the flames bursting out on every side, defeated their generous intention.

Digitized by Google

cence; it was rather a vast furnace, from every side of which the burning rafters were continually falling, and threatening us with instant destruction. I could still, however, proceed with some degree of safety under the piazzas. These were filled with numerous warehouses which the soldiers had broken open, every chest was rifled, and the spoil exceeded their most sanguine expectations. No cry, no tumult was heard in this scene of horror. Every one found abundantly sufficient to satisfy his thirst for plunder. Nothing was heard but the crackling of the flames, the noise of the doors that were broken open, and occasionally a dreadful crash caused by the falling in of some vault. Cottons, muslins, and in short all the most costly productions of Europe and of Asia, were a prey to the flames. The cellars were filled with sugar, oil, and vitriol; these burning all at once in the subterraneous warehouses, sent forth torrents of flame through thick iron grates, and presented a striking image of the mouth of hell. It was a spectacle both terrible and affecting. Even the most hardened minds acknowledged the conviction that so great a calamity would, on some future day, call forth the vengeance of the Almighty upon the authors of such crimes.

The information which I endeavoured to obtain, with regard to the causes of this fire, was very unsatisfactory, until, at my return in the

Digitized by Google

evening to the palace where our staff was quartered, I met a Frenchman who had been tutor to the children of a Russian Prince. This gentleman possessed much general knowledge, and a sound judgment in politics. His conversation was peculiarly interesting as he had long lived among the Russian nobility, and was perfectly acquainted with their character and views. Moreover, the events which happened in Moscow since the battle of the Moskwa had passed under his observation, and, although a Frenchman, he formed one of the small number of those who, by their talents and prudence, had always been on a footing of intimacy with Count Rastopchin. This meeting was extremely fortunate, as it gave me an opportunity of learning what I was so desirous to know; particularly the true character of the governor, who, notwithstanding the blackest calumnies, will always be revered by his fellow-citizens, and will be cited by future generations as a model of courage and patriotism.

"Although the French advanced towards Mos-
"cow in three columns, after the battle of Boro-
"dino*," said the tutor, "none but the nobility,
"and the persons attached to the government,
"were acquainted with the terrible disasters with

* By this name the Russians distinguished the battle of the Moskwa.

Digitized by Google

" which the city was threatened. Thinking it " prudent to conceal the truth from the populace, " Count Rastopchin had caused it to be an- " nounced that the French were defeated. This " contributed to prolong our illusions; but when " we saw the Russian army return within our " walls, preceded by twenty thousand wounded, " and dragging after them the whole population " of the country, the citizens renounced their " peaceful occupations, and abandoned them- " selves to the utmost agitation. All societies " were dissolved, and the public institutions de- " serted. Even the mechanics, renouncing the " work that supplied their families with bread, " shut up their shops, and sharing in the con- " sternation, which was become universal, mixed " with the immense crowd which was running " to the governor's house, to know whether they " were to abandon or defend the city.

" In this painful and critical situation, the " Count Rastopchin announced that he was about " to march against the French at the head of a " hundred thousand men, and ordered several " redoubts to be constructed before the city *. " He caused a vast quantity of sabres and lances " to be forged, and distributed arms to all the " citizens who demanded them. It was likewise

* On Sparrow Hill: but that position was feebly defended.

Digitized by Google

" said, that an English artificer was secretly " employed at the chateau of Voronevo, in pre- " paring fusees and other combustibles, and it " was added, that he was constructing a balloon " on a new principle by which all the officers of " the French army might be exterminated *. Then " collecting round him the most illustrious of the " nobility, and the richest and most esteemed " among the merchants, he reminded his fellow- " citizens of the solemn promises which they had " made to their Emperor. He recalled to their " minds that memorable scene, when the sove- " reign, the father of his country, received from " his children the homage of their fortunes and " their lives. At this recollection, the governor, " overpowered by the sentiments which agitated " him, was almost suffocated by excess of feeling, " and lost the faculty of speech. This silent " scene lasted several minutes, and produced " more tears than the most eloquent harangue " would have done. But the interest of the state, " conquering a sensibility so natural and so af- " fecting, a nobleman in the assembly who, " from his diplomatic office, was well acquainted " with the causes that had produced this dis- " astrous war, advanced before the Count, and " addressed them in the following words:

* The Twelfth Bulletin.

Digitized by Google

" ' Inhabitants of Moscow! if you knew how
" ' the paternal heart of our monarch has suf-
" ' fered, and the means he has employed to en-
" ' sure the repose and happiness of his empire—
" ' if you knew how much his love of peace, and
" ' his desire to maintain even a disadvantageous
" ' alliance, have made him forgetful of his own
" ' personal glory—you could then alone form an
" ' adequate idea of our revered prince. Six weeks
" ' ago he thus addressed us:—I have neglected
" ' nothing to ensure the peace of my country;
" ' but the more sacrifices I made the more Na-
" ' poleon demanded. We shall be fully justified
" ' in the eyes of posterity, who will acknowledge
" ' that we did not resort to arms, until driven to
" ' the utmost extremity; and when our beloved
" ' empire was compelled to decide between the
" ' chances of war, or the infamy of having all
" ' its laurels blasted. But, since injustice forces
" ' us to the combat, why should we fear it?
" ' For more than a century, war has always been
" ' to us favourable and glorious. The north
" ' was formerly the terror of the south; and
" ' now, when the north approaches to civiliza-
" ' tion, and wishes for universal peace, the south,
" ' blinded by an ungovernable and fatal am-
" ' bition, abandons its rich provinces to over-
" ' run our frozen regions. Is it then necessary
" ' always to be the oppressor, if we would not

Digitized by Google

" ' be oppressed ; and must my pacific sentiments
" ' be now the misfortune of my reign ? In vain
" ' this scourge of mankind alleges, that he wages
" ' a war of policy, and that this is the struggle of
" ' civilization against barbarism ! a flimsy artifice,
" ' which can deceive those only who are unac-
" ' quainted with our manners and our principles.
" ' This highly vaunted civilization, what has it to
" ' fear from us, who exhaust our treasures, who
" ' traverse the seas, and explore both hemispheres,
" ' to cultivate and to naturalize it in our cli-
" ' mate ? And they to whom we go for instruc-
" ' tion, and who enrich themselves by selling us
" ' the productions of their industry, these very
" ' people dare to call us barbarians ! No, no,
" ' this is not the motive of the war which the un-
" ' grateful Napoleon makes upon us. He fears
" ' our rapid progress more than our barbarism.
" ' In fact, what nation is virtuous enough not
" ' to be jealous of the miraculous protection
" ' which Providence grants to our empire. It is
" ' scarcely a century since Peter, of illustrious
" ' memory, placed it in the rank of great nations;
" ' and since that time, how many countries have
" ' been subdued !—how many cities have been
" ' captured !—how many provinces reduced to
" ' submission ! Yet let us rather consider as the
" ' noblest trophies, the towns that have been
" ' founded, the districts that have been civilized,

Digitized by Google

" ' and the universities, colleges, and institu-
" ' tions, which have been established. These
" ' abundantly prove that we have effaced the
" ' line which separated civilized from savage
" ' Europe. It is our spirit of civilization, so
" ' closely resembling that of which the French
" ' are vain, which now attracts their hatred.
" ' They reproach us for our conquests over the
" ' Persians and Turks, pretending not to know,
" ' that it is owing to the terror with which we
" ' have inspired the Mussulmen, that Europe has
" ' ceased to be invaded by these infidels. Hun-
" ' gary is indebted to us for its safety, and Italy
" ' for its preservation. Far different is the cha-
" ' racter of our enemies, whose conquests are
" ' only a new subject of dissension and war with
" ' their neighbours.'

" This is the substance of that memorable
" speech which the Emperor Alexander pro-
" nounced in the assembly of the nobles, and
" which the orator most judiciously repeated, as
" best calculated to rouse the courage of those
" who had not been present. Count Rastopchin,
" now recalling all the energy of his character,
" disdained longer to resort to the popular style
" of eloquence which he had used in his procla-
" mations, and availing himself of the impression
" which this discourse had produced on the

Digitized by Google

" assembly, addressed the people in the follow-
" ing words:—

" 'BRAVE MOSCOVITES!

" 'Our enemy advances; and you already hear
" 'the roar of his cannon not far from our
" 'suburbs. This bad man wishes to overwhelm
" 'a throne, the splendour of which eclipses his
" 'own. We have yielded ground, but we are
" 'not conquered. You know that our Em-
" 'peror, in imitation of his ancestors, resides in
" 'the camp. Our armies are almost untouched,
" 'and are reinforced every day by new levies;
" 'but those of our perfidious enemy, arrive ex-
" 'hausted, annihilated. Insensible man! he
" 'thought that his victorious eagle, after having
" 'wandered from the banks of the Tagus to the
" 'sources of the Volga, could subdue one, which,
" 'reared in the midst of the Kremlin, proudly
" 'hovers over our heads, extending one wing
" 'towards the pole, and reaching with the other
" 'beyond the Bosphorus.

" 'Let us persevere, and, I venture to predict,
" 'that our country will rise again from the midst
" 'of its ruins, greater and more majestic than
" 'before. But to attain an end so desirable,
" 'consider, my friends, that the greatest sacri-
" 'fices must be made, and the dearest affections
" 'renounced. Prove yourselves worthy descend-

Digitized by Google

" ' ants of the Pojarskies, the Palitsires, and the
" ' Minines, who in the most calamitous times,
" ' established by their courage the belief that the
" ' Kremlin is inviolable. Cherish this pious
" ' tradition, and maintain it by arming your-
" ' selves against our dangerous enemy, who
" ' wishes to overthrow our altars, and to annihi-
" ' late our empire. Sacrifice every thing to
" ' obtain a victory, or be content to lose your
" ' honour, your fortunes, and your independ-
" ' ence. But if God, in the dispensations of
" ' his wisdom, should allow vice to triumph for
" ' a moment, remember that it will be your
" ' sacred duty to fly into the deserts, and to
" ' abandon a country which will no longer be
" ' be yours, while the presence of the foe pol-
" ' luted it. The inhabitants of Saragossa, recol-
" ' lecting the immortal courage of their ances-
" ' tors, who, to escape the yoke of the Romans,
" ' kindled a funeral pile, and immolated their
" ' families and themselves, have preferred like
" ' them, to perish under the ruins of their town,
" ' rather than submit to oppression. The same
" ' tyranny now threatens to subjugate us. Let
" ' us shew to the whole universe that the glo-
" ' rious example of the Spaniards has not been
" ' lost upon the Russians.'

" After this speech the most violent agitation
" succeeded. The senators applauded with trans-

Digitized by Google

"port, and all, with the exception of seven, "decided that Moscow should be burnt. As "soon as the populace was informed of this reso- "lution, they rushed through the principal streets, "crying aloud that it was better to perish than to "outlive their country and their religion. Those "on whom nature had not bestowed the most "ardent courage, ran to their homes to save their "families from the impending danger. Some "fled with haste from the city, to experience in "the woods the horrors of famine; others solemnly "devoted themselves to the defence of their na- "tive town, or joined the troops, which were "commencing their retreat, while the rest of the "population seizing their arms, either took re- "fuge in the Kremlin, or immediately set fire to "the Exchange, which contained, as you know, "immense riches, and where the French army "might have found means of subsistence during "the whole winter."

This was the account which the worthy tutor gave me of all that had happened at Moscow, previous to our arrival there. We both lamented these calamitous events; but the day being calm, we hoped that the fire would not extend beyond the Exchange. Our regret and our terror were unspeakable, when on the morrow, at the dawn of day (September 16), we saw the conflagration raging extensively, and perceived that the wind,

Digitized by Google

blowing with violence, spread the flames in every direction.

The most heart-rending scene which my imagination had ever conceived, far surpassing the saddest story in ancient or modern history, now presented itself to my eyes. A great part of the population of Moscow, terrified at our arrival, had concealed themselves in cellars or secret recesses of their houses. As the fire spread around, we saw them rushing in despair from their various asylums. They uttered no imprecation; they breathed no complaint; fear had rendered them dumb: and hastily snatching up their most precious effects, they fled before the flames. Others, of greater sensibility, and actuated by the genuine feelings of nature, saved only their parents, or their infants, who were closely clasped in their arms. They were followed by their other children, running as fast as their little strength would permit, and with all the wildness of childish terror, vociferating the beloved name of mother. The old people, borne down by grief more than by age, had not sufficient power to follow their families, and expired near the houses in which they were born. The streets, the public places, and particularly the churches, were filled with these unhappy people, who, lying on the remains of their property, suffered even without a murmur. No cry, no complaint was

Digitized by Google

heard. Both the conqueror and the conquered were equally hardened; the one by excess of fortune, the other by excess of misery.

The fire, whose ravages could not be restrained, soon reached the finest parts of the city. Those palaces which we had admired for the beauty of their architecture, and the elegance of their furniture, were enveloped in the flames. Their magnificent fronts, ornamented with bas-reliefs and statues, fell with a dreadful crash on the fragments of the pillars which had supported them. The churches, though covered with iron and lead, were likewise destroyed, and with them those beautiful steeples, which we had seen the night before, resplendent with gold and silver. The hospitals too, which contained more than twelve thousand wounded, soon began to burn. This offered a dreadful and harrowing spectacle. Almost all these poor wretches perished. A few who still lingered, were seen crawling half burnt amongst the smoking ruins; and others, groaning under heaps of dead bodies, endeavoured in vain to extricate themselves from the horrible destruction which surrounded them.

How shall I describe the confusion and tumult when permission was granted to pillage this immense city! Soldiers, sutlers, galley-slaves, and prostitutes, eagerly ran through the streets, penetrating into the deserted palaces, and carrying

Digitized by Google

away every thing which could gratify their avarice. Some covered themselves with stuffs, richly worked with gold and silk; some were enveloped in beautiful and costly furs; while others dressed themselves in women's and children's pelisses, and even the galley-slaves concealed their rags under the most splendid habits of the court. The rest crowded into the cellars, and, forcing open the doors, drank to excess the most luscious wines, and carried off an immense booty.

This horrible pillage was not confined to the deserted houses alone, but extended to those which were inhabited, and soon the eagerness and wantonness of the plunderers, caused devastations which almost equalled those occasioned by the conflagration. Every asylum was violated by the licentious troops. They who had officers in their houses flattered themselves that they should escape the general calamity. Vain illusion! the fire progressively advancing, soon destroyed all their hopes.

Towards evening, when Napoleon no longer thought himself safe in a city, the ruin of which seemed inevitable, he left the Kremlin, and established himself with his suite in the castle of Peterskoë. When I saw him pass by, I could not behold without abhorrence the chief of a barbarous expedition, who evidenty endeavoured to escape the decided testimony of public indig-

Digitized by Google

nation, by seeking the darkest road. He sought it, however, in vain. On every side the flames seemed to pursue him, and their horrible and mournful glare, flashing on his guilty head, reminded me of the torches of Eumenides pursuing the destined victims of the Furies!

The generals likewise received orders to quit Moscow. Licentiousness then became unbounded. The soldiers, no longer restrained by the presence of their chiefs, committed every kind of excess. No retreat was safe, no place sufficiently sacred to afford protection against their rapacity. Nothing more forcibly excited their avarice than the church of Saint Michael, the sepulchre of the Russian Emperors. An erroneous tradition had propagated the belief that it contained immense riches. Some grenadiers presently entered it, and descended with torches into the vast subterranean vaults, to disturb the peace and silence of the tombs. But instead of treasures they found only stone coffins, covered with pink velvet, and bearing a thin silver plate, on which were engraved the names of the Czars, and the dates of their birth and decease. Mortified at the disappointment of their hopes, they searched the very coffins, and seized every offering which had been consecrated by piety, and chiefly valuable from the sentiments of which it had been the pledge. With all the excesses of plunder, they

Digitized by Google

mingled the most degrading and horrible debauchery. Neither nobility of blood, nor the innocence of youth, nor the tears of beauty, were respected. The licentiousness was cruel and boundless; but it was inevitable in a savage war, in which sixteen different nations, opposite in their manners and their language, thought themselves at liberty to commit every crime, fully persuaded that all their disorders would be attributed to the nation alone*.

---

* In his later editions, Labaume has suppressed a very beautiful episode, because it was supposed to be too romantic, and inconsistent with the gravity of an historian. It is, however, too interesting and too well told to be lost to the public: while therefore the translator faithfully adheres to the fourth and improved edition in his text, he will give the pleasing romance of the first edition in the form of notes. The following pathetic story had a place here:—

As they eagerly searched every part of the building, they perceived, at the end of a dark gallery, a lamp, the half-extinguished light of which fell on a small altar. They immediately proceeded towards it, and the first object which presented itself to their notice, was a young female, elegantly dressed, and in the attitude of devotion. At the noise of the soldiers, the unhappy girl screamed violently, and fell into a swoon. In that situation she was carried before one of our generals.

As long as I have life I shall retain the impression which the appearance of that young lady, pale, and almost dying, produced on my mind. Her countenance, in which grief and despair were equally legible, was irresistibly interesting. As her recollection returned, she seemed to deprecate the care which

Digitized by Google

Penetrated by so many calamities, I hoped that the shades of night would cast a veil over the dreadful scene, but they contributed, on the contrary, to render the conflagration more terrible.

---

was employed in recalling her to life. While we gazed on her lovely form, every bosom was inspired with pity, and we were all anxious to become acquainted with her history. The general, in particular, but from very different motives, seemed eager to hear it; and sending most of those who were present away, he begged her to relate to him her misfortunes.

"Of what use," said she, "would it be to mention to you "the wealth of a house which will soon be annihilated? Suffice "it that the name of my father is celebrated in the history of "our empire, and that he is now serving with distinction in the "army which is gloriously fighting in defence of our coun- "try. My name is *Paulowna*. On the day preceding your en- "trance into Moscow, I was to be united to one of the young "warriors, who had distinguished himself at the battle of Mo- "jaïsk. But in the midst of the nuptial solemnities, my father "was informed that the French were at the gates of the city, "and suspending our marriage, and taking my husband with "him, they hastened to join the army. As I sat with my af- "flicted family on the following morning, we heard the roar of "the cannon; the noise evidently approached, and we no longer "doubted that we must quit Moscow. We immediately fled, "but when we arrived near the Kremlin, an immense crowd met "us, and rushing hastily by, parted me from my mother and "sisters. I endeavoured in vain to recall them by my cries. "The noise of arms, and the shouts of an infuriated populace, "overpowered my feeble voice, and in an instant I was rendered "truly miserable. The French, meanwhile, penetrated into "the town, and driving all before them, advanced towards the "Kremlin. To find a shelter from their excesses, I with many

Digitized by Google

The violence of the flames, which extended from north to south, and were strangely agitated by the wind, produced the most awful appearance, on a sky which was darkened by the thickest smoke. Frequently was seen the glare of the burning torches, which the incendiaries were hurling from the tops of the highest towers, on those parts of the city which had yet escaped destruction, and which resembled at a distance so many passing meteors. Nothing could equal the anguish that absorbed every feeling heart, and which was increased in the dead of the night, by

---

"others ran into the citadel, which was considered a place of "security. As I could not mix with the combatants, I retired "to the church of Saint Michael, seeking refuge among the "graves of the Czars. Kneeling near their sepulchres, I in- "voked the manes of those illustrious founders of our country, "when, on a sudden, some brutal soldiers broke in upon my "retreat, and dragged me away from an inviolable and sacred "asylum." When the unhappy girl had finished her history, she shed a torrent of tears, and throwing herself at the general's feet, implored him to respect her virtue, and restore her to her relations. He was more interested by her beauty than her tears; and pretending to pity her misfortunes, pledged himself to relieve them. He offered her his house as a protection; and promised to use his utmost endeavours to discover her father and her destined husband. But as I knew the disposition of the man, I clearly perceived, that this apparent generosity was only a snare to deceive the innocent Paulowna. There wanted nothing more to complete the horrors of that day, when he resolved to outrage virtue and seduce innocence.

Digitized by Google

the cries of the miserable victims who were savagely murdered, or by the screams of the young females, who fled for protection to their weeping mothers, and whose ineffectual struggles tended only to inflame the passion of their violators. To these dreadful groans and heart-rending cries, which every moment broke upon the ear, were added, the howlings of the dogs, which, chained to the doors of the palaces, according to the custom at Moscow, could not escape from the fire which surrounded them.

Overpowered with regret, and with terror, I flattered myself that sleep would for a while release me from these revolting scenes; but the most frightful recollections crowded upon me, and all the horrors of the day again passed in review. My wearied senses seemed at last sinking into repose, when the light of a near and dreadful conflagration piercing into my room, suddenly awoke me, I thought that my chamber was a prey to the flames. It was no idle dream, for when I approached the window, I saw that our quarters were on fire, and that the house in which I lodged was in the utmost danger. Sparks were thickly falling in our yard, and on the wooden roof of our stables. I ran quickly to my landlord and his family. Perceiving their danger, they had already quitted their habitation, and had retired to a subterranean vault which

Digitized by Google

afforded them more security. I found them with their servants all assembled there, nor could I prevail on them to leave it, for they dreaded our soldiers more than the fire. The father was sitting on the threshold of the vault, and appeared desirous of first exposing himself to the calamities which threatened his family. Two of his daughters, pale, with dishevelled hair, and whose tears added to their beauty, disputed with him the honour of the sacrifice. It was not without violence that I could snatch them from the building, under which they would otherwise soon have been buried. When these unhappy creatures again saw the light, they contemplated with indifference the loss of all their property, and were only astonished that they were still alive. Though they were convinced that no personal injury would now be offered them, they exhibited not any tokens of gratitude; but resembled those miserable criminals, who, having been ordered to execution, are bewildered when a reprieve unexpectedly arrives, and whom the agonies of death render insensible to the gift of life.

Desirous of terminating the recital of this horrible catastrophe, for which history wants expressions, and poetry has no colours, I shall pass over in silence many circumstances revolting to humanity, and merely describe the dreadful confusion which arose in our army, when the fire

Digitized by Google

had reached every part of Moscow, and the whole city was become one immense flame.

The different streets could no longer be distinguished, and the places on which the houses had stood were marked only by confused piles of stones, calcined and black. The wind, blowing with violence, howled mournfully, and overwhelmed us with ashes, with burning fragments, and even with the iron plates which covered the palace. On whatever side we turned we saw only ruins and flames. The fire raged as if it were fanned by some invisible power. The most extensive ranges of buildings seemed to kindle, to burn, and to disappear in an instant.

A long row of carriages was perceived through the thick smoke loaded with booty. Being too heavily laden for the exhausted cattle to draw them along, they were obliged to halt at every step, when we heard the execrations of the drivers, who, terrified at the surrounding flames, endeavoured to push forward with dreadful outcries. The soldiers were diligently employed in forcing open every door. They seemed to fear lest they should leave one house untouched, and as if the booty last acquired was preferable to what they had already obtained, they abandoned their former prize to seize on every new object. Some, when their carriages were laden almost to breaking down, bore the rest of their plunder on their

Digitized by Google

backs. The flames obstructing the passage of the principal streets, often obliged them to retrace their steps. Thus, wandered from place to place through an immense town the avenues of which they did not know, they sought in vain to extricate themselves from a labyrinth of fire. Many, instead of approaching the gates by which they might have escaped, wandered further from them, and thus became the victims of their own rapacity. The love of plunder was yet predominant, and induced our soldiers to brave every danger. They precipitated themselves into the midst of the flames. They waded in blood, treading upon the dead bodies without remorse, whilst the ruins of the houses, mixed with burning coals, fell thick on their murderous hands. They would probably all have perished, if the insupportable heat had not forced them at length to withdraw into the camp.

The fourth corps having also received orders to leave Moscow, we proceeded (September 17th) towards Peterskoë, where our divisions were encamped. At that moment, about the dawn of day, I witnessed a spectacle, at once affecting and terrible, namely, a crowd of the miserable inhabitants drawing upon some mean vehicles all that they had been able to save from the conflagration. The soldiers, having robbed them of their horses, the men and women were slowly and painfully

Digitized by Google

dragging along their little carts, some of which contained an infirm mother, others a paralytic old man, and others the miserable wrecks of half-consumed furniture. Children, half naked, followed these interesting groups. Affliction, to which their age is commonly a stranger, was impressed on their features, and, when the soldiers approached them, they ran crying into the arms of their mothers. Alas! what habitation could be offered them which would not constantly recall the object of their terror? Without a shelter and without food, these unfortunate beings wandered in the fields, and fled into the woods; but wherever they bent their steps, they met the conquerors of Moscow, who frequently ill-treated them, and sold before their eyes the goods which had been stolen from their deserted habitations.

Digitized by Google

PART II.

BOOK VI.

MALO-JAROSLAVITZ.

The arrival of a victorious French army in the ancient capital of the Czars, the richest and most central city of Russia, and which a religious belief had hitherto considered sacred, was one of the most extraordinary occurrences of modern history.

Our former conquests had accustomed Europe to behold our vastest and wildest plans crowned with complete success. But none of our expeditions had an appearance of imposing grandeur like this, or were so calculated to seduce and mislead the imagination. The difficulty of the enterprise equalled every romantic tale that the Persians, the Greeks, or the Romans, had conceived. The distance from Paris to Moscow,

Digitized by Google

nearly equal to that which separated the capital of Alexander from that of Darius; the nature of the country, and the rigour of the climate, which had been hitherto supposed inaccessible to the armies of Europe; the remembrance of Charles XII., who, wishing to attempt a similar project, did not dare to pass Smolensko; the terror of the Asiatic nations, astonished to see the people who had fled before us arrive amongst them; all concurred to give to the progress of the grand army, an air of sublimity which recalled to our recollection the most celebrated expeditions of antiquity.

Such was the aspect of our conquests, when taken in the most brilliant point of view; but, when sound reason had taught us to look into futurity, nothing presented itself but the darkest and most frightful images. The horrible extremity to which the inhabitants of Moscow had been reduced, proved to us that we had no means of treating with a people determined to make such immense sacrifices; and, that the vain glory of signing a treaty of peace at Moscow had kindled a fire, the ravages of which would spread through Europe, and would give to the war a character so sanguinary, that it could only end in the entire ruin of a generous people, or the fall of that evil genius, whom God, in his displeasure,

Digitized by Google

seemed to have designed as a new exterminating angel to chastise mankind.

The wisest and most judicious witnessed the destruction of the city with alarm and terror. In the space of five days the whole of it had become a prey to the flames, the light of which illuminated our camp every night. "There is no "hope," said they, "of a speedy termination of "the war, even should we continue our con- "quests. Having completed the ruin of Mos- "cow, who knows whether we shall not attempt "that of Petersburg? And, even when we have "subdued all Russia, may we not anticipate an "expedition to the Euphrates or the Ganges? "Alas! our devotion and our successes only "serve to prolong the misfortunes of our coun- "try, by exciting to yet wilder projects an am- "bition which knows no limits."

Although the ruin of Moscow was a great loss to the Russians, it was still more sensibly felt by us, and it ensured to our enemies all the advantages which they had promised themselves from the rigour of their climate. In vain did we represent to the inhabitants that the burning of their capital was useless, and that the French army ought to rejoice at being relieved from an immense population, whose natural ardour and fanaticism might have caused dangerous sedi-

Digitized by Google

tions. After much reflection, I am convinced that the Russian government had reason to fear, from the crafty and treacherous character of our chief, that this population, instead of revolting against us, might have become instrumental to our projects; and that many of the noblesse, led away by an example so dangerous, or seduced by brilliant, but deceitful, promises, might have abandoned the interests of their country.

To prevent this calamity, Count Rastopchin sacrificed the whole of his fortune in burning Moscow, thinking that this great example would be the only means of rousing the energies of the nobility, and that by throwing the odium of the conflagration upon us, he would render us the objects of universal execration. Besides, the city being provisioned for eight months, the French army by occupying it, would have been able to wait the return of spring, and then renew the campaign with the armies of reserve which were encamped at Smolensko, and on the Niemen; while by burning Moscow, they would compel us to a precipitate retreat in the most rigorous season of the year.

Their hopes, founded on this calculation, could not be disappointed; for our formidable army, though it arrived in the fine season, had lost a third of its numbers by fatigue and the rapidity of our march; and the enemy had no reason to

Digitized by Google

fear that we could maintain any position, since our want of discipline had made a desert of all our conquests, and our improvident chief had formed no plan to facilitate our retreat.

In short, to finish this picture of our distresses, in the midst of our apparent victory, the whole army was discouraged and worn out with fatigue. The cavalry was nearly ruined, and the artillery-horses, exhausted by want of food, could no longer draw the guns.

Although we were the deplorable victims of the conflagration of Moscow, we must do justice to the inhabitants of that city. It is impossible not to admire their generous devotedness to their country, and we must acknowledge that they have, like the Spaniards, raised themselves, by their courage and their perseverance, to that high degree of true glory which constitutes the greatness of a nation.

When we recollect the sufferings that we had endured, and the losses* we had experienced by fatigue alone, previous to our arrival at Moscow, and that at a time when the earth, covered with

* The fourth corps, when we set out from Glogau, consisted of about forty-eight thousand men, but when we left Moscow, there were only twenty thousand infantry, and two thousand cavalry. The fifteenth division, consisting of thirteen thousand men at the commencement of the campaign, was then reduced to four thousand.

Digitized by Google

its choicest productions, offered us abundant resources, one can scarcely conceive how Napoleon could be so blind and obstinate as not immediately to abandon Russia; particularly when he saw that winter approached, and that the capital, on which he had so much depended, no longer existed*. It seems as if Providence had deprived him of reason, to punish him for his pride, since he presumed to think, that they who had sufficient courage to lay waste and destroy their country, would afterwards be weak enough to accept his hard proposals, and sign a treaty of peace on the smoking ruins of their metropolis. They who possessed the smallest foresight, predicted our misfortunes, and imagined that they heard the prophetic words which were denounced against Nebuchadnezzar, in the midst of his greatest prosperity:—

"Thy empire shall pass into other hands. "Thou shalt be driven from the company of "men, and shalt live in exile until thou shalt "know that the Most High ruleth in the king-

* Napoleon seems to have undervalued the military talents of Kutusoff, whom he had defeated at the battle of Austerlitz. He was likewise kept in utter ignorance of the forces and the manœuvres of the Russians, to harass or cut off his retreat, and he was deceived both in the character of Alexander and the Russian nation, whom he confidently expected would have been terrified into unconditional submission by the loss of their capital. *Translator's note.*

Digitized by Google

" dom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he " will."

During the four days (17, 18, 19, and 20, September) that we remained near Peterskoë *, Moscow did not cease to burn. In the meantime the rain fell in torrents; and the houses near the *chateau* being too few in number to contain the numerous troops who were encamped there, it was almost impossible to obtain shelter: men, horses, and carriages, bivouacked in the middle of the fields. The staff-officers, placed around the *chateaux* where their generals resided, were established in the English gardens, and lodged under grottos, Chinese pavilions, or green-houses, whilst the horses, tied under acacias or linden-trees, were separated from each other by hedges or beds of flowers. This camp, whose very situation rendered it truly picturesque, appeared still more extraordinary from the new costume adopted by the soldiers, most of whom, as some defence from the inclemency of the weather, had covered themselves with every species of apparel used by the northern nations, and which had formed the most pleasing and amusing variety on the public walks of that city. Thus we saw, walking in our camp, soldiers dressed *à*

* This imperial *chateau*, of which we have already spoken, is but a quarter of a league from Moscow.

Digitized by Google

la Tartare, à la cosaque, à la Chinoise; one wore the Polish cap, another the high bonnet of the Persians, the Baskirs, or the Kalmouks. In short, our army presented the image of a carnival; and it was afterwards justly said, that our retreat commenced with a masquerade, and ended with a funeral.

The abundance which the soldiers now enjoyed made them speedily forget their fatigues. With the rain pouring on their heads, and their feet immersed in the mud, they consoled themselves with good cheer, and the advantages which they derived from trafficking in the plunder of Moscow. Although it was forbidden to go into the city, the soldiers, allured by the hope of gain, violated the order, and always returned loaded with provisions and merchandise. Under the pretence of going on marauding parties, they returned near the Kremlin, and dug amongst the ruins, where they discovered entire magazines, whence they drew a profusion of articles of every description. Our camp no longer resembled an army, but a great fair, at which each soldier, metamorphosed into a merchant, sold the most valuable articles at an inconsiderable price; and although unsheltered in the fields, and exposed to the inclemency of the weather, he, by a singular contrast, ate off China plates, drank out of silver vases, and possessed almost every elegant

Digitized by Google

and expensive article which luxury could invent.

The neighbourhood of Peterskoë and its gardens at length became as unhealthy as it was inconvenient. Napoleon returned to establish himself at the Kremlin, which had not been burnt, and the guards and staff-officers received orders to re-enter the city (the 20th and 21st of September)*. According to the calculations of the engineers, the tenth part of the houses still remained†. They were divided between the different corps of the grand army. We possessed the faubourg of St. Petersburg, in which we had been quartered at our first entry into the city.

As we again traversed the streets of Moscow, we experienced the most heart-rending sensations, at perceiving that no vestige remained of those noble hotels at which we had formerly been established. They were entirely demolished, and their ruins, still smoking, exhaled a vapour which filling the whole atmosphere, and forming the densest clouds, either totally obscured the sun, or gave to his disk a red and bloody appearance.

---

* The cossacks had formed a plan for an unexpected and furious attack on the castle of Peterskoë, and, it is said, that had Napoleon delayed his departure thence one quarter of an hour, nothing could have saved him from falling into their hands.—*Translator's note.*

† 24th Bulletin.

Digitized by Google

The outline of the streets was no longer to be distinguished. The stone palaces were the only buildings which preserved any traces of their former magnificence. Standing alone amidst piles of ruins, and blackened with smoke, these wrecks of a city so newly built resembled some of the venerable remains of antiquity*.

Each one endeavoured to find quarters for himself, but rarely could we meet with houses which joined together; and, to shelter a few companies, we were obliged to occupy a vast tract of land, which only offered a few habitations scattered here and there. Some of the churches, composed of less combustible materials than the other buildings, had their roofs entire, and were transformed into barracks and stables. Thus the hymns and holy melodies which had once resounded within these sacred walls, now gave place to the neighing of horses, and the horrible blasphemies of the soldiers.

Curious to know in what state I should find the house at which I had lodged, I long sought for it in vain, until a neighbouring church which had survived the general destruction enabled me

* The reader will be pleased to hear that Moscow is fast recovering her former magnificence, and that it is materially improved in the regularity and beauty of the streets. *Translator's note.*

Digitized by Google

to ascertain it. I could scarcely believe that it was the same. The interior was entirely consumed, and the four walls alone remained, which were full of chinks, occasioned by the fierceness of the fire. I was reflecting on the terrible effects of this destructive element, when the unfortunate servants of the house made their appearance from the bottom of a vault. Emaciated by famine and distress, I should doubtless have found their features much altered, if the ashes and smoke had not rendered it totally impossible for me to know them again. They resembled spectres more than human beings. With mingled pity and astonishment I recognized my former host among these miserable wretches. He was concealed under some rags which he had borrowed from his domestics. They now lived all together, for misfortune had equalized every condition! On seeing me, he burst into tears, particularly when he presented to me his children half naked and dying with hunger. Although his grief was silent, it made a deep impression on my heart. He told me by signs that the soldiers, after having plundered his dwelling while it was burning, had even robbed him of the very clothes which he wore. This distressing picture touched me to the soul. I wished to alleviate his sufferings, though I feared I had only barren consolation to offer. The same man who a few days before had given me a

Digitized by Google

splendid repast, accepted with gratitude a morsel of bread.

Although the population of Moscow had almost disappeared, there still remained some of those unfortunate beings whom misery had accustomed to look on all occurrences with indifference. Most of them had become the menial servants of their spoilers, and thought themselves most happy if they were permitted to share any loathsome food which the soldiers rejected. There were also a number of unfortunate girls, and these alone derived any advantage from the plunder of Moscow. The soldiers eagerly associated with them, and when they were once introduced into our quarters, they soon became absolute mistresses of them, and squandered away all that the flames had spared. A small number, however, really merited our regard by their education, and above all by their mistunes, for, horrible to relate, famine and misery had compelled their mothers to come and offer them to us. This immorality, under such circumstances, recoiled on those who had not sufficient virtue to resist the temptation, and who regarded with an eye of passion, the forms which hunger had emaciated, and disease had rendered dangerous and loathsome *.

* Of all these victims, the most to be lamented, and the most worthy of pity, was the unfortunate Paulowna, whose history I

Digitized by Google

There yet remained at Moscow a class of men the most contemptible of all, since they escaped the punishment due to their former crimes by consenting to commit still greater; these were the convicted felons. During the whole time of the conflagration at Moscow, they signalised themselves by the audacity with which they executed the orders they had received. Provided with phosphorus, they lighted the fire anew, wherever it appeared to be extinguished, and even crept by stealth into the houses which were inhabited, to involve them in the general ruin.

Several of these miscreants were arrested with torches in their hands, but their punishment, too prompt and summary, produced little effect (24th September). The people, who always detested their conquerors, regarded these executions merely

---

have already related, and who, deceived by an apparent generosity, had been weak enough to place unlimited confidence in the general under whose protection she lived. This man well knew how to impose upon his innocent captive, by his assiduities and false pity; and by feigning sentiments which he never felt, and taking advantage of the impossibility of discovering her parents or her lover, he persuaded her that she would find in him a friend and a protector. On the faith of repeated promises, this innocent female, after having spent several days in unavailing tears, became a victim to the artifices of her ungenerous lover. Alas! the general was already married, and she who had expected to become his wife, found herself only a dishonoured slave.

Digitized by Google

as the effect of policy. In short, these victims were too obscure for the expiation of such a crime; and above all, their trial, wanting publicity and legal form, threw no light on the cause of this dreadful calamity, and could not justify us clearly in the estimation of those who persisted in believing that we were the authors of it.

Many of the Moscovites who had been concealed in the neighbouring forests, perceiving that the conflagration had ceased, believed that they had nothing more to fear, and re-entered the city. Some of them sought in vain for their houses, the very site of which could scarcely be discovered; others would fain have taken refuge in the sanctuary of their God, but it had been profaned. The public walks presented a revolting spectacle. The ground was thickly strewed with dead bodies, and from many of the half-burnt trees was suspended the carcass of an incendiary. In the midst of these horrors were seen many of the unfortunate inhabitants, who, destitute of every asylum, were collecting the charred planks, to construct a cabin in some unfrequented place, or ravaged garden. Having nothing to eat, they eagerly dug the earth to find the roots of those vegetables which the soldiers had gathered, or wandering among the ruins they diligently searched among the cinders for any food which the fire had not entirely consumed. Pale, emaciated, and almost naked, the

Digitized by Google

very slowness of their walk, announced the excess of their sufferings. Others recollecting that some barges loaded with grain had been sunk, plunged into the river to feed on the wheat then in a state of fermentation, and the stench of which was most disgusting. To relieve this dreadful recital, I will relate the noble conduct of a French soldier, who found in one of the cemeteries a woman that had just lain in. Perceiving that she had been abandoned by all to whom she could naturally look for protection, that she was without succour, and without food, the generous soldier gave her every assistance in his power, and for many days, shared with her the scanty provisions which he was able to procure*.

When the main body of the Russian army had taken its different positions, the proprietors of the country in the neighbourhood of Moscow, perceiving that the disasters of the war had highly exasperated the people against us, availed themselves of the popular feeling to excite a general insurrection. Many raised levies at their own expense, and put themselves at the head of the insurgent peasants. These forces, united to the cossacks, intercepted our convoys on the great roads. But the principal aim of these military

* See "Moscow before and after the fire by G. T. D. L." Page 125.

Digitized by Google

preparations was to harass our foragers, and above all, to deprive them of the resources which they were still able to procure from the neighbouring villages. The different corps of our army, being far separated from each other, and encamped on an immense plain covered with wood, it was impossible to guard against the destructive warfare to which we were exposed.

In digging under the ruins of Moscow, the soldiers often found magazines of sugar, wine, or brandy. These discoveries, although they would have been valuable in happier times, afforded no great relief to an army which had consumed all the grain of the country, and which would soon have neither bread nor meat to eat.

Our cattle perished for want of forage, and to procure others, it was each day necessary to engage in combats always disadvantageous to us; and at so great a distance from our native country and all our resources, the smallest loss was sensibly felt.

Our real miseries was disguised by an apparent abundance. We had neither bread nor meat, yet our tables were covered with sweet-meats, syrups, and dainties. Coffee, and every kind of wine, served in china or crystal vases, convinced us that luxury might be nearly allied to poverty. The extent and the nature of our wants rendered

Digitized by Google

money of little value to us, and this gave rise to an exchange rather than a sale of commodities. They who had cloth offered it for wine; and he who had a pelisse could procure plenty of sugar and coffee.

Napoleon buoyed himself up with the ridiculous hope of recalling those by mild proclamations, who, to free themselves from his yoke, had made their capital an immense funeral-pile. To quiet their alarm, and inspire them with confidence, he had divided the remains of the town into districts, nominated governors for each, and instituted magistrates who might preserve the lives and property of the few citizens that still remained. The Consul-General Lesseps being appointed governor of Moscow, published a proclamation, to announce to the inhabitants the *paternal intentions* of Napoleon. But these *kind* and *generous* promises never reached the Moscovites; and even if they had, the rigorous circumstances under which the people were placed, would have made them regard the proclamation as insulting irony. Besides, the greater part had fled behind the Volga, and the others, who had taken refuge in the midst of the Russian army, were animated by a deadly hatred, and breathed only sentiments of vengeance!

In the meantime Prince Kutusoff, having conveyed the greater part of his forces to Lectas-

Digitized by Google

kova between Moscow and Kaluga, to cover the southern provinces, confined Napoleon so narrowly, that in spite of his different manœuvres, he could not disengage himself from his painful position, but was always constrained to fall back on his own lines. It was impossible to advance towards Petersburg without leaving the Russian army on our rear, and endangering our safety, by abandoning all communication with Poland. He could not march towards the Volga, since every undertaking in that direction, would only divide his troops and remove him further from his resources. Nothing therefore could be more critical than the situation of the French army now encamped on the roads of Twer, of Wladimir, of Razan, and of Kaluga. It was compelled to remain at Moscow, being hemmed in on every side, having scarcely any cavalry, yet forced to make head against the enemy at every point, through a line of a hundred leagues in circumference. Moreover, this capital, once so magnificent, was now become the abode of pestilence and death, while the surrounding country was totally deserted, except by the peasants and the cossacks, who plundered our convoys, intercepted our couriers, massacred our foragers, and caused us irreparable evils. From that time our position became more and more painful. Our poverty and the discontent of the soldiers augmented every

Digitized by Google

day; and, to complete our misfortunes, there appeared no probability of a peace.

It would be curious to relate the extravagant projects which, under these circumstances, were discussed in the army. Some spoke of going to the Ukraine—others of marching on Petersburg. But those who were wise, maintained that we ought, ere long, to return to Wilna. Napoleon, always most obstinate when surrounded with difficulties, and passionately fond of extraordinary exploits, persisted in maintaining himself in an absolute desert, and thought to frighten the enemy by feigning to pass the winter there. To give some colour to this ridiculous stratagem, he formed the plan of arming the Kremlin, and even of making a citadel of the large prison which was situated in the quarter of Petersburg, and vulgarly called the *Square House*; and to complete the folly and absurdity of the whole, when every magazine was exhausted, and we had nothing to eat, he ordered us to lay in provision for two months. While we were occupied in meditating on all these chimeras, and particularly on provisioning Moscow without any resource, the report of peace, believed by those alone who so ardently desired it, filled our hearts with joy; and flattered us with the hope that we should not be compelled to attempt the execution of projects absolutely impracticable. This news acquired

Digitized by Google

much credit from the armistice which had been concluded between the cossacks and the advanced posts of the King of Naples. Such a convention seemed to augur that there might be some hope of a reconciliation between the two Emperors; especially as we knew that General Lauriston had been sent to the head-quarters of Prince Kutusoff, and that, in consequence of his interview with this commander, a courier had been despatched to St. Petersburg to decide on peace or war.

In the meantime, Napoleon, with his usual activity, daily reviewed his troops, and by the severest proclamations obliged the colonels to maintain the strictest discipline throughout their regiments. The weather continued remarkably fine, and contributed much to the brilliancy of these reviews. A circumstance so rare in this advanced season was regarded as almost miraculous by the Moscovites, who, accustomed to see it snow from the month of October to that of April, beheld with astonishment the beautiful days which we enjoyed. The people, naturally superstitious, and who had long and axiously expected the winter as their certain avenger, abandoned themselves to despair, and considered this prodigy as the effect of the manifest protection which the Almighty had afforded to Napoleon. But this apparent protection was precisely the cause of his ruin,

Digitized by Google

as it rendered him so infatuated, as to believe that the climate of Moscow would always resemble that of Paris*. His foolish and impious vanity made him hope to command the seasons as he had commanded men; and, abusing his good fortune, he believed that the sun of Austerlitz would enlighten him even unto the pole; and that, like another Joshua, he would be able by his voice to arrest this luminary in its course, and compel it to protect him in his ambitious career.

While we were deluded by the protracted negotiation, preparations were made to recommence the war, but nothing was done to guard against the rigours of winter. Meanwhile, our prospects became more alarming. The longer our stay at Moscow was continued, the more inconvenient and uncomfortable it became. In proportion as we exhausted the neighbouring villages, we were compelled to go to places more remote. Their distance rendered our excursions as perilous as they were fatiguing. Setting out at break of day, rarely did our foragers return before night. These excursions, daily repeated, harassed our men, and destroyed our cavalry, particularly the

* 22d, 23d, and 24th, Bulletins. "The season," said he, "is "very fine; it is similar to the climate of France in October, "or perhaps a little colder. Every thing indicates that we "must soon think of winter-quarters." See the 25th Bulletin.

Digitized by Google

artillery-horses. The strongest regiments could not muster more than 100 horses; the flesh of these animals was become the only food of the soldiers, and to complete our wretchedness, the audacity of the cossacks redoubled in proportion as our weakness rendered us defenceless.

They soon gave us a fatal proof of this, by attacking, even in the very environs of Moscow, the village in which the dragoons of the guard were cantoned. Our soldiers, though assailed by superior numbers, courageously defended themselves, and the affair would have been glorious for them, if an officer of rank, and 50 men had not fallen into the power of the Russians. A few days afterwards they intercepted a convoy of artillery coming from Viazma, and conducted by two majors. Napoleon believed that these officers were culpable, and instituted an inquiry respecting their conduct. One of them destroyed himself, more from the disgrace of having lost his cannon, than the fear of being found guilty. To prevent similar losses, Broussier's division, and the light cavalry commanded by Count Ornano, received orders to establish themselves in the environs of the *chateau* of Galitzin, situated between Mojaïsk and Moscow. These troops delivered the neighbouring country from the cossacks, who always avoided meeting them. But the smallest spot unoccupied by our troops, was

Digitized by Google

immediately taken possession of by these hordes of Tartars, who profited by the advantages which their knowledge of the country afforded them, to attempt the boldest enterprises.

They made another attack on a convoy of artillery, coming from Italy, under the orders of Major Vivés. It was reported that the escort, having taken to flight, surrendered, almost without opposition, the artillery which had been intrusted to it. The enemy carried off the field-pieces and the horses, when Count Ornano being informed of this attack pursued the cossacks and overtook them in the middle of the woods. At the sight of our cavalry they fled, and abandoned all the fruits of their victory without resistance. Major Vivés would have been brought to trial, but our departure, and the disasters which ensued, forced Napoleon to relax from his accustomed severity.

While the fourteenth division guarded the road from Viazma, the thirteenth was on that of Twer. This last division had been long undisturbed in its cantonments, when we were informed that Count Saltikof, the favourite of the Emperor Alexander, and proprietor of the village of Marfino, in the neighbourhood of Dimitrow, had armed all his peasants, and that, having entered into combination with several other lords, he was forming in his *chateau* a grand scheme of

Digitized by Google

insurrection. To prevent the consequences of so dangerous an example, orders were given to a brigade of the thirteenth division to repair to the *chateau* de Marfino. The general who commanded it made strict inquiries to convince himself that these meetings had really taken place. The result was unsatisfactory and fruitless; nevertheless, obliged to conform to the orders which he had received, he committed to the flames a palace which had been justly celebrated as one of the finest in Russia. This pretended meeting caused a suspicion that Napoleon only wished to revenge himself on Count Saltikof, to whom he was an enemy, because that nobleman had continued faithful to his sovereign.

(Oct. 15th). The various manœuvres which the different corps of the army were ordered to make, confirmed us in the opinion that we should not long be able to maintain our position. Every thing presaged our approaching departure, and suspicion was changed into certainty on perceiving that the hospitals at Minsk and Wilna were evacuated, and that the greater part of the wounded generals were included in that convoy, escorted by about 1000 infantry. We heard likewise that the cavalry of the Italian guards had quitted their good cantonments in the environs of Dimitrow, to return to Moscow and that they proceeded thence to occupy the position of Cha-

Digitized by Google

ropovo (15th October), a little village situated on the road from Borovsk, about six leagues from Moscow. At the same time the Viceroy ordered the thirteenth division to return, the fourteenth to advance, and the cavalry of General Ornano to march towards Fominskoë, whither it appeared that the whole of the fourth corps was about to direct its course. The cossacks, informed of this movement, availed themselves of a favourable opportunity, when the baggage of our light cavalry was feebly escorted, to attack the convoy in the neighbourhood of Osighovo, but seeing General Broussier's division, they abandoned a part of their booty, and sheltered by the woods, escaped the pursuit of our soldiers.

We waited with the utmost anxiety the return of the courier which had been despatched to Petersburg, and in the meantime General Lauriston again set out for the head-quarters of Kutusoff, and that with so much precipitation that he was obliged to use the relays which had been appropriated to the use of the Emperor alone. Persuaded that the answer would be favourable, our army neglected the necessary precautions, and imagined itself in the most perfect security. The enemy, profiting by this indiscretion, attacked on the 18th of October the cavalry of the King of Naples in the vicinity of Taroutina, and carried off from General Sebastiani a park of twenty-six

Digitized by Google

pieces of cannon, and a great many waggons. This attack, made at the moment when the cavalry was foraging, was fatal to that division of the army, which had been already much reduced. But it is false that our troops betook themselves to flight. The King of Naples, who was on foot at the moment of attack, was no sooner informed of it, than he mounted his horse, and followed by his staff rushed into the midst of the action, which he directed with skill and intrepidity as soon as our cavalry could form. The cossacks were speedily compelled to fly, and abandon their prince. The Russian infantry advancing to their support, the engagement became general, and was obstinately contested. The carabiniers and some Polish regiments, less fatigued than the rest of the cavalry, contributed to avenge the honour of our arms, and shewed themselves worthy of their former brilliant reputation. General Bagawout, who commanded the second Russian corps, was killed in the action; and General Bennigsen was wounded. We lost nearly two thousand men; and we particularly regretted the death of Generals Fischer and Dery. The latter was aide-de-camp to the King of Naples, and had on every occasion given proof of the greatest courage, and the highest talents.

The Emperor was at the Kremlin occupied in reviewing his troops when he received this unex-

Digitized by Google

pected news. He immediately became furious, and in the transports of his rage, exclaimed that it was treacherous and infamous; that they had attacked the King of Naples in contempt of all the laws of war, and that none but barbarians would have thus violated a solemn convention*. The parade was immediately dissolved, all hopes of peace vanished, and the order for our departure was given that very evening. All the corps were to quit Moscow, and take the grand road to Kaluga. We then hoped that we should go to the Ukraine, to seek, under a milder sky, countries less savage and more fertile. But those who were best informed, assured us that our movement on Kaluga was only a false manœuvre, to conceal from the enemy our design of retreating on Smolensko and Witepsk.

Those who did not witness the departure of the French army from Moscow, can form but a faint idea of what the Greek and Roman armies were, when they abandoned the ruins of Troy or of Carthage. But they who observed the appear-

* No truce had been concluded between the two armies; the advanced posts of Milloradowitch had merely intimated to those of the King of Naples their desire and hope that peace might be concluded. These treacherous demonstrations deceived us, and caused the belief that hostilities would be suspended till the return of the courier despatched to Petersburg. That courier was not expected before Oct. 20th.

Digitized by Google

ance of our army at this moment acknowledged the accuracy of those interesting scenes which are so admirably described in the writings of Virgil and Livy. The long files of carriages, in three or four ranks, extended for several leagues; loaded with the immense booty which the soldiers had snatched from the flames; and the Moscovite peasants, who were now become our servants, resembled the slaves which the ancients dragged in their train. Others carrying with them their wives and children, or the wretched prostitutes of Moscow, represented the warriors amongst whom the captives had been divided. Afterwards came numerous waggons filled with trophies, among which were Turkish or Persian standards torn from the vaulted roofs of the palaces of the Czars, and, last of all, the celebrated cross of Saint Iwan gloriously closed the rear of an army which, but for the imprudence of its chief, would have been enabled to boast that it had extended its conquests to the very limits of Europe, and astonished the people of Asia with the sound of the same cannon with which the pillars of Hercules had re-echoed.

The Russians surprised us on the 18th. It was for this reason that Napoleon asserted, that we had been attacked three days before the expiration of the armistice.

As we set out very late, we were obliged to

Digitized by Google

encamp at a miserable village, only one league from Moscow. The cavalry of the Italian guards, which had been stationed at Charopovo, marched on the following day (19th October), and joined us at Patoutinka, not far from the *chateau* of Troitskoë, where Napoleon had established his head-quarters. Nearly the whole army was re-united at this point, with the exception of the cavalry which was in advance, and the young guards who remained at Moscow to bring up the rear. We experienced much difficulty in procuring the means of subsistence for the troops; but we still continued to bivouac, and the carriages which every officer brought with him, furnished him with some provisions.

On the following day, the cavalry of the royal guards and the whole of the fourth corps were to have directed their course towards Charopovo; but at the moment when they were commencing their march, they were recalled, and the Prince ordered these troops to pursue the same route which we had followed on the preceding evening. We crossed the Pakra near Gorki. This beautiful village no longer existed but in name; and the river, choked up with the ruins of the houses which had been a prey to the flames, flowed in a black and muddy stream. Above was the beautiful *chateau* of Krasnoë which had been entirely pillaged; but the elegance of the building still

Digitized by Google

formed a striking constrast with the rustic hills on which it was built. We halted here, and an hour afterwards left the high road to seek on our right a path that would conduct us to Fominskoe, where General Broussier and our cavalry had been for four or five days in view of the enemy. Our march by this unfrequented road was very tedious and painful, but it procured us the advantage of finding some villages, which, although they were deserted, had not been so completely plundered as those on the great road. We passed the night at Inatowo, where we discovered a *chateau* situated on an eminence that overlooked the country by which we had arrived.

We afterwards continued our march with an intention to regain the road to Charopovo, which we at length reached, near the village of Bouikasovo. These geographical details, on which I dwell so much, will not appear tedious when it is recollected that they are absolutely necessary in order to point out the difficulties that we had to encounter in our operations. Having only incorrect maps, and marching without guides, we could not even pronounce the names of the villages described in our charts. At length we discovered a peasant, whom we seized and kept for two days, but he was so stupid that he only knew the name of his own village. As this march was, however, very important for the Emperor, who

Digitized by Google

followed us with the main body of the army, the Prince made me every day draw out a plan of the road, to send to the major-general.

Having surmounted every obstacle, we regained the old road of Kaluga. In one hour afterwards we arrived at Fominskoë. Broussier's division was encamped in the environs of this village, and the cavalry, placed in advance, were led on by the Viceroy, who proceeded to reconnoitre the height which the cossacks occupied; but at his appearance they precipitately retired, leaving his highness at liberty to encamp peaceably on the ground for which we had expected to fight.

According to the military report, the position of Fominskoë would have been advantageous for the Russians if they had resolved to defend it. Through the middle of the village, overlooked by a hill, ran the river Nara, which here formed a little lake surrounded by marshes, owing to the contraction of the valley. The whole army had to pass this defile, which contained only a single bridge. This bridge was reserved for the carriages, and a temporary one constructed for the infantry.

To execute this operation, and to permit a part of the army to pass over before us, we were allowed a day of repose (22d October). In the meantime, the Poles, commanded by Prince Po-

Digitized by Google

niatowski, marched on Vereïa, where the Hetman Platoff was with his cossacks. Napoleon soon followed us with his accustomed suite, and in an instant the village was filled with carriages, horses, and men. But, owing to the skilful precautions which had been adopted, all this passed without confusion; a circumstance which excited not a little astonishment, for the *cohorts of Xerxes** had not more baggage than we.

The same day Captain Evrard, who had been despatched to Charopovo, announced to us that he had heard a tremendous report in the direction of Moscow. We afterwards learned that it had been produced by the blowing up of the Kremlin. The destruction of this noble citadel, and of the magnificent buildings which it contained, was accomplished by the young imperial guards, commanded by the Duke of Treviso. That marshal was ordered to destroy every thing that the flames had spared. Thus perished this celebrated city, founded by the Tartars, and destroyed by the French! Enriched with every gift of fortune, and situated in the centre of the continent, she experienced from the passions of an obscure and remote islander the most lamentable of human vicissitudes. The historian will not fail to re-

* An expression which Napoleon made use of in the Bulletins of the Campaign of 1809, when speaking of the Austrian armies.

Digitized by Google

mark that the same man who affected to sacrifice us to promote the progress of civilization, boasted in his own bulletins, that he had caused Russia to retrograde, at least, a hundred years*.

Moscow was not retaken by the Russians, but was regularly evacuated by the young guard, all whose movements were connected with our plans of operation. General Winzingerode, who commanded the corps which observed Moscow during our occupation of the city, having advanced as far as a street near the Kremlin, with the young Narishkin, his aide-de-camp, and some dragoons, unexpectedly met with a piquet of the 15th regiment, commanded by Lieutenant Lelou de Maupertuis, who immediately seized the bridle of the general's horse, and declared him his prisoner. Ashamed of his imprudence, Winzingerode was thrown into such confusion, that he pretended to be a herald. Could we consider as such a general-in-chief who advanced evidently to animate his soldiers, without any of the preliminary communications of a herald, and without making one of the usual signals?

A part of the army having crossed the Nara, the fourth corps followed them about five o'clock in the morning (23d October), and proceeded towards Borovsk. The enemy appeared no more

* See the 21st and 26th Bulletins.

Digitized by Google

during this day's march. The cossacks had fled before us to announce to the general-in-chief, that we had deceived his vigilance by leaving the new road to Kaluga through Taroutina, and taking the old one which passes by Borovsk.

Kutusoff being informed of our march, immediately abandoned his intrenched camp at Leotashowa, but left us in doubt whether he would take the road by Borovsk, or by Malo-Jaroslavitz. Napoleon occupied the former city, situated on an eminence, around which ran the Protva in a deep and inaccessible channel.

The Viceroy, who had encamped half a league beyond Borovsk, in a little village on the right of the road, ordered Delzons' division to march on Malo-Jaroslavitz, and occupy that position before the Russians could seize on it. This general, having found it without defence, took possession of it with only two battalions, leaving the rest of his troops in the rear on the plain. We imagined that this position was secured, when, at day-break on the following morning (24th October), we heard a very heavy cannonade in our front. The Viceroy, suspecting the cause of it, immediately mounted his horse, and accompanied by his staff, galloped towards Malo-Jaroslavitz. On approaching this city, the noise of the cannon redoubled; we heard the sharp-shooters on both sides, and at last we distinctly perceived the Rus-

Digitized by Google

sian columns, who were advancing by the new road of Kaluga, to force the position which we occupied.

When we arrived below the heights of Malo-Jaroslavitz*, General Delzons came towards us, and, approaching the Viceroy, said to him, "Yesterday evening, on my arrival, I took possession of this place, and no force then appeared to dispute it with me; but, about four o'clock in the morning, I was attacked by a large body of infantry. My two battalions immediately flew to arms, but overpowered by a much superior force, they have been compelled to descend from the heights, and abandon Malo-Jaroslavitz†."

The Viceroy, feeling the importance of this loss, and wishing immediately to repair it, gave orders to General Delzons to march with his whole division. An obstinate engagement now commenced, and fresh troops having arrived to

* See the Plan of the Field of Battle of Malo-Jaroslavitz.

† General Delzons had acted very judiciously, and conformably to his instructions, in only placing two battalions in that position. The bridge of the Louja, which ran below Malo-Jaroslavitz, had been destroyed, consequently a whole division could not have passed the river: and the utter uncertainty on what point the enemy would advance, had caused orders to be issued to General Delzons, to hold himself ready to retreat immediately, should he hear the firing of cannon in the direction of Borovsk.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

the assistance of the Russians, our soldiers for a moment gave way. General Delzons thinking they were about to fly, rushed into the thickest of the battle, and led them again to the charge; but, at the moment when he was defending with obstinacy the barriers of the city, some of the enemy's riflemen, who were intrenched behind the wall of a cemetery, fired upon him, and a ball entering his forehead, he immediately expired. When the Viceroy was informed of this sad event, he appeared to be much affected at the loss of a general so worthy his esteem, and, after having paid a just tribute to his memory, sent General Guilleminot to replace him. The battle was now furiously contested in the streets of the town, when the fourteenth division advanced in close column to relieve those who had been so long engaged. Our soldiers now resumed the offensive, but several fresh columns of Russians coming from Lectaskova, forced them to retreat. We saw them descending the hill with precipitation, and making towards the bridge, as if they wished to repass the river Louja, which ran at the foot of the eminence. But being rallied by Colonel Forestier, and seeing themselves supported by the chasseurs and grenadiers of the royal guards, our brave fellows resumed their accustomed courage, and once more ascended the heights. In the meantime, the great number of

Digitized by Google

wounded who had abandoned the field of battle, and the difficulty with which we maintained ourselves in Malo-Jaroslavitz, convinced the Viceroy of the necessity of sending other troops against the continual reinforcements of the enemy. Pino's division, which during the whole of the campaign had sought for every opportunity of distinguishing itself, obeyed, with transport, the orders of the Prince. Led on by several of the staff, they rapidly ascended the heights, with their bayonets fixed, and uttering shouts of joy, succeeded in establishing themselves in all the positions whence the enemy had driven us. This success, however, was dearly purchased. A great number of brave Italians were the victims of their emulation of French valour; nor was it without sincere regret that we heard of the death of General Levié, whom fate permitted to enjoy his new rank only eight days. We were equally afflicted, on beholding General Pino returning covered with blood; who, though he suffered much from the pain of his wound, felt still more sensibly the death of a brother, who had fallen by his side. The chasseurs of the royal guard would have followed the same movement, but the fifteenth division having been repulsed, they advanced to support it, at the very moment that the enemy, making the most rapid progress, were proceeding towards the bridge, and threatened to

Digitized by Google

drive into the river all the troops who had crossed it. Seeing that they had not a moment to lose, they attacked the Russians, and retook the position from which the Italian division had been previously driven. The affair was most obstinately contested on both sides, when the enemy having unmasked two large redoubts, opened a destructive fire on the chasseurs, which mowed down whole ranks. Those who remained hesitated for a moment, but Colonel Peraldi reminding them of the lasting disgrace which would attach to them if they abandoned their post, had the satisfaction to see these brave fellows, whose ammunition had failed, take the cartridges from the cartouche-boxes of their dead companions, and charging their arms, rush headlong upon the enemy. The Russians being astonished at such intrepidity imagined that they were about to be overwhelmed by fresh troops, and disarming their redoubts, sought refuge behind the last line of their fortifications. During this time, the enemy's cannon raged with fury, and his balls carried destruction into the ranks of the royal light troops placed in reserve, and even amongst the staff of his Highness. It was at this moment that General Giffienga, a man of great merit and extraordinary courage, received a ball in his throat which obliged him to quit the field of battle.

The success of the day was decided, and we

Digitized by Google

occupied the town and all the heights, when the fifth division of the first corps joined us, and took up their position on our left. The third division of the same corps arrived also after the battle, and occupied a wood on our right*. Until nine o'clock in the evening, our batteries and foot-soldiers did not cease their firing, at a very short distance from the enemy; but at length night and excessive weariness put an end to this sanguinary combat. It was nearly ten o'clock before the Viceroy and the staff were able to take the repose which was necessary after so many fatigues. We encamped beneath Malo-Jaroslavitz, between the town and the river Louja; but the troops bivouacked through the whole extent of the positions which they had so gloriously carried.

On the next day we were convinced that the obstinacy with which the Russians had disputed our possession of Malo-Jaroslavitz, was in consequence of their intention to cover Kaluga and to oppose our retreat through the southern provinces. It was much to be regretted that we had halted at Fominskoë: for the enemy would have been turned in his intrenched camp, and would not have arrived in time to defend the different positions between Malo-Jaroslavitz and Kaluga.

* See the Plan of the Field of Battle of Malo-Jaroslavitz.

Digitized by Google

They who were in the confidence of the Emperor assured us, that Napoleon wished by this movement on Smolensko to destroy the manufactory of arms at Tula, and afterwards to retreat by the route of Serpeisk and Elnïa, which had not been ravaged.

About four o'clock in the morning, the Viceroy mounted his horse. We ascended the eminence on which the battle had been fought, when we saw the plain covered with cossacks, whose light artillery was firing on our troops: we also observed on our left three grand redoubts. On the preceding evening each of them had mounted fifteen or twenty pieces of cannon, with which they defended the right flank of Kutusoff, supposing that we should have attempted to turn his position on that side. About ten o'clock the firing abated, and at twelve it entirely ceased.

The interior of Malo-Jaroslavitz presented the most horrible spectacle. At the entrance of the town, we beheld with grief the spot where General Delzons had perished, and regretted that a premature death had terminated his glorious career. We did equal justice to the memory of his brother, who received a mortal wound, while endeavouring to rescue him from the hands of the enemy. A little further on they shewed us the place where General Fontane had been wounded; and at the foot of the hill, we saw the grenadiers

Digitized by Google

of the 35th regiment of the line, who were bestowing funeral honours on their brave colonel.

The town in which we had fought no longer remained. We could not even distinguish the lines of the streets, on account of the numerous dead bodies with which they were heaped. On every side we saw a multitude of scattered limbs and human heads, crushed by the wheels of the artillery. The houses formed a pile of ruins, and under their burning ashes, appeared many skeletons half consumed. Many of the sick and wounded had, on quitting the field of battle, taken refuge in these houses. The small number of them who had escaped the flames, now presented themselves before us, with their faces blackened, and their clothes and hair dreadfully burnt. In a piteous tone, they besought us to afford them some relief, or kindly to terminate their sufferings by death. The most ferocious were affected at this sad spectacle, and, turning hastily away, could not refrain from shedding tears. A scene so distressing made every one shudder at the evils to which despotism exposes humanity, and we almost fancied that those barbarous times were returned, when we could only appease the gods by offering human victims on their sanguinary altars.

Towards the afternoon, Napoleon, having ar-

Digitized by Google

rived with a numerous suite, coolly surveyed the field of battle, and heard without emotion the heart-rending cries of the unhappy wounded who eagerly demanded assistance. Although accustomed for twenty years to the calamities of war, he could not, when he entered the town, repress his astonishment at the desperation with which both parties had fought. Had he intended to continue his march on Tula and Kaluga, the experience of this battle would have deterred him. Even his insensibility was, on this occasion, forced to render justice to those to whom it was due*. He gave a convincing proof of it by praising the valour of the fourth corps, and saying to the Viceroy, "The honour of this glorious day "belongs entirely to you †."

While we were disputing with the enemy the position of Malo-Jaroslavitz, more than six thousand cossacks unexpectedly rushed on the head-quarters of the Emperor, established at Ghorodnia, and carried off six pieces of cannon, which were posted not far from the village. The Duke of Istria immediately galloped after them with all

* The twenty-seventh Bulletin.

† Being lately at Mantua, I was told by Sir Robert Wilson, who was an eye-witness of the combat of Malo-Jaroslavitz, that Prince Eugene, with only 20,000 men, had sustained the shock of nine Russian divisions, of 10,000 men each.

Digitized by Google

the cavalry of the guards, supported by the fourth division*, and by the corps of General Latour Maubourg. General Rapp and Major Retort rendered themselves very conspicuous in this affair. The first had his horse killed under him. The cossacks, cut to pieces and dispersed, effected their retreat; but, in their flight, one of their numerous detachments attacked the baggage of the fourth corps, and would have captured it, if the cavalry of the Italian guards had not received them with the same intrepidity as the imperial guards. The coolness of Joubert, the commander of the escort, was much praised in this affair, who, singly opposed to several cossacks, courageously defended himself till some of his men arrived to his assistance.

From the commencement of the campaign, the son of the Hetman Platoff, mounted on a superb white horse from the Ukraine, was the faithful companion in arms of his brave father, and always at the head of the cossacks. He was often remarked by our advanced guards, on account of his courage and intrepidity. This fine young man was the idol of his father, and the hope of the warlike nation which expected hereafter to

* It was then commanded by General Frederic, the successor of Count Dessaix, who being unable to take an active part in the campaign on accouut of his wounds, had been nominated Governor of Berlin.

Digitized by Google

obey him. In a desperate charge of cavalry, which took place near Vereïa, between Prince Poniatowski and the Hetman Platoff, the Poles and Russians, animated by a mutual hatred, fought with the utmost fury. Excited by the ardour of the combat, they gave no quarter, and on both sides fell numerous brave men, who had returned in safety from former battles.

Platoff, who saw his best soldiers falling around him, forgot his own danger, and with an anxious eye looked round for his favourite son. But the hour approached when this unfortunate father was destined to feel that life is sometimes almost insupportable. The unhappy youth had returned from the heat of the battle, and was preparing to renew the attack, when he received a mortal wound from a Hulan Pole. At this moment his father appeared, and flying to his assistance, threw himself upon him. On seeing his beloved parent, the son heaved a deep sigh, and would have expressed for the last time his affection and his duty; but, as he attempted to speak, his strength failed him, and he breathed his last.

The following morning at day-break, the chiefs of the cossacks came to express their grief, and earnestly requested that they might be permitted to render funeral honours to the son of their Hetman. Each of the officers, when he saw this excellent young man stretched on a bear-skin,

Digitized by Google

involuntarily kneeled, and respectfully kissed the hand of a youth who, but for a premature death, would have rivalled the greatest heroes in bravery and in virtue. After having, according to their ritual, offered fervent prayers for the repose of his soul, they removed him from the presence of his father, and carried him in solemn procession to a neighbouring eminence covered with cypress, where he was to be interred.

The cossacks, ranged around in order of battle, observed a religious silence, and bowed their heads in profound respect, while grief was painted in every countenance. At the moment when the earth for ever separated them from the son of their Prince, they fired a volley over the grave, and dismounting from their horses, they slowly and solemnly marched round the tomb, with their lances pointed towards the earth *.

* This episode may appear romantic, because it describes customs so different from ours. The German papers, from which it is taken, have narrated it in a manner truly poetical. Those of France have likewise related such extraordinary circumstances of the Hetman Platoff, that he will hereafter form a prominent, and an interesting figure in the annals of history.

Digitized by Google

BOOK VII.

DOROGHOBOUÏ.

The victory of Malo-Jaroslavitz discovered two melancholy truths:—first, that the Russians, far from being weakened, had been reinforced by numerous battalions, and that they all fought with an obstinacy which made us despair of gaining new victories. "But two battles more like this," said the soldiers, "and Napoleon will be without "an army." It likewise discovered that we could no longer effect an easy retreat, since the enemy, having at the close of the engagement outflanked us, prevented our columns from retiring by the route of Medouin, Joukhnov, and Elnïa, and reduced us to the unhappy necessity of retreating precipitately by the great road of Smolensko, or in other words, by the desert which we ourselves had made. Beside these apprehensions, too well founded, we also knew that the Russians had despatched before us the army of Moldavia, on the very route which we were to pursue, and that

Digitized by Google

the corps of Wittgenstein was advancing to join Admiral Tschikagow.

After this sanguinary combat, those who judged only from appearances and popular report, supposed that we should march on Kaluga and Tula; but when they saw that a strong advanced-guard of the enemy, instead of taking that direction, had outflanked our right by defiling on Medouin, all who were experienced in warlike manœuvres perceived that the Russians had penetrated the designs of Napoleon, and that it was necessary for us to make a rapid march on Viazma, to arrive there before them. There was no longer any question of Kaluga or the Ukraine, but how to effect a safe retreat on the route of Borovsk. As soon as our retreat was decided, the fourth corps began its retrograde march, leaving all the first corps, and the cavalry of General Chastel at Jaroslavitz. These troops were to form the rear-guard, at the distance of a day's march from us.

(October 26th). We saw on our route to what the unfortunate and memorable victory of Malo-Jaroslavitz had reduced us. At every step were waggons abandoned for want of horses to draw them, and the fragments of innumerable military carriages burned for the same reason. With such misfortunes at the very commencement of our retreat, we formed sad and mournful presages

Digitized by Google

of the future. Those who carried with them the spoils of Moscow, trembled for their riches. We were principally disquieted at seeing the deplorable state of the feeble remains of our cavalry, and we listened with melancholy foreboding to the frequent explosions of our ammunition-waggons, which sounded from afar like distant thunder.

It was night when we arrived at Ouvarooskoë. Surprised at seeing the place in flames, we were informed that orders had been issued to destroy every thing in our route. Near this village was a *chateau*, which, although in the centre of a wood, possessed a grandeur and magnificence equal to the noblest palaces of Italy. The richness of the furniture corresponded with the beauty of the architecture. We saw many exquisite paintings, chandeliers of the greatest value, and numerous lustres of rock-crystal, which gave to these apartments, when lighted up, an appearance truly enchanting. Even these were not spared; and we learned on the morrow that our artillery-men, finding the progress of the flames too slow, had hastened and completed the destruction, by placing several barrels filled with gunpowder on the ground-floor.

The villages, which a few days before had afforded us shelter, were now level with the

Digitized by Google

ground. Under their ashes, yet warm, and which the wind drove towards us, were the bodies of hundreds of soldiers and peasants. Many an infant was to be seen cruelly butchered, and many a female savagely massacred on the spot which had witnessed her violation.

We left the village of Borovsk, which had been equally a prey to the flames, on our right, and reascended the Protva to find a ford for our artillery. Having discovered one, half a league from the village, it would have been attempted by all our corps, but many of the waggons, sticking fast in the middle of the river, so much encumbered the only spot at which a passage was practicable, that it was necessary to search for another ford. On reconnoitring the bridge of Borovsk, I found that it still remained, and that it offered great facility for the baggage. The Prince immediately caused the third division to fall back, and thus, by means of the bridge, opened to our corps a better and shorter route. The only danger which we had to fear, was the passage of the waggons laden with ammunition through a town completely in flames.

All our equipages filed across this vast conflagration without a single accident, and after having passed through many frightful defiles, the night found us at the execrable village of Alféréva

Digitized by Google

(Oct. 27th), where the generals of division with difficulty found a barn to shelter them. That of the Viceroy was so ruinous, that we pitied those who were destined to inhabit it. In addition to all these evils, the want of provision aggravated our sufferings. That which we had brought from Moscow was almost consumed, and every one, covetous of the little that remained to him, retired to eat in secret the morsel of bread which his industry had procured. Our horses fared yet worse. A little thatch, torn from the roofs of the houses, was their only food. Many of them died of fatigue and hunger, obliging the artillery-men to abandon all that was not absolutely necessary, while every day redoubled in a frightful manner the explosions of the waggons, which were blown up and destroyed (October 28th).

On the following day we recrossed the Protva a little below Vereïa. This town was burning at the moment of our passage: and the devouring flames, rising in whirlwinds on every side, soon reduced it to ashes. Vereïa was the more unfortunate, since, lying at a distance from the great road, she had flattered herself that she might escape the calamities by which others had suffered. In truth, with the exception of the engagement between the Russians and the Poles, she had hitherto experienced little of the horrors of war. Her fields had not been ravaged, and

Digitized by Google

her well-cultivated gardens were now covered with vegetables of every kind, which our famished soldiers devoured in an instant.

The third corps and the young guard which had been left at Moscow, now rejoined us by the direct road. This last corps had brought with it the military chest, and a great quantity of baggage; it immediately continued its route, and now formed our advanced guard. At Vereïa, Winzingerode and his aide-de-camp who had been taken prisoners at Moscow by the Duke of Treviso, were presented to the Emperor. Napoleon received him very sternly, and treated him with great severity, declaring, that being a Saxon, he should be tried by a military commission, as a rebel against the Confederation of the Rhine. He was fortunately retaken in the retreat near Minsk, by Colonel Czernichew who was proceeding to Tschachniki with a numerous detachment of cossacks, to apprise Count Wittgenstein of the movement which Admiral Tschikagow had made to effect a junction with him on the banks of the Beresina.

At night we slept at a wretched village, of which we could not learn the name. We supposed that it was Mitïaéva, because we were only a league from Ghorodok-Borisov. This place was yet more miserable than the hamlet at which we had halted the night before. The greater part of the

Digitized by Google

officers passed the night in the open air, which was the more unpleasant, as the nights began to be extremely cold, and little wood could be procured. Even the huts which the generals had hastily erected were demolished by the soldiers to supply a few scanty fires; and many who went to sleep in comfortable cabins, on waking in the middle of the night, found that the sky was their only covering.

Napoleon, who preceded us one day's march, had already passed Mojaïsk, burning and destroying every thing which he found on his route. His soldiers were so intent on this devastation, that they set fire even to the places where we should have halted. This exposed us to great and unnecessary suffering; but our corps, in its turn, burned the few houses that the others had left, and deprived the army of the Prince of Eckmuhl, which formed the rear-guard, of all power to shelter itself from the inclemency of the night. That corps had likewise to contend with an exasperated enemy, which, apprised of our retreat, hastened on every side to avenge itself. The cannon which we heard every day, and at distances continually diminishing, sufficiently announced to us the fatigues, the sufferings, and the dangers, of that division of the army.

At length, having passed through Ghorodok-Borisov (October 29th), in the midst of almost

Digitized by Google

impenetrable clouds of smoke, we entered, an hour afterwards, on a plain which appeared to have been long since devastated. We saw at a distance the dead bodies of men and horses; but the numerous intrenchments, half destroyed, and the aspect of the ruined town, recalled to our memories the environs of Mojaïsk, through which we had passed as conquerors, fifty-one days before. The Westphalians and the Poles encamped upon the ruins, and at their departure burnt the few houses which had escaped the first conflagration: but the destruction had been already so complete, that we could scarcely see the light of the flames. The only thing which struck us was the newly-erected tower, rising amid the ruins, and by its whiteness, forming a melancholy contrast with the black clouds which enveloped it. It remained entire, and the clock yet tolled the hours, though the city was no more.

Our corps did not pass through Mojaïsk, but, turning to the left, we arrived (October 29th) at the site of the village of Krasnoë, where we had slept at the day after the battle of the Moskwa: I say the site of the village, for the houses existed no longer, and the *chateau* alone had been preserved for the use of Napoleon. We encamped round the *chateau*, and as long as I live, I shall recollect the manner in which we crowded together, to protect ourselves from the

Digitized by Google

cold, and slept with comfort on the yet warm ashes of the houses that had been burned the day before.

(October 30th). The nearer we approached to Mojaïsk, the more desolate the country appeared. The fields, trampled down by thousands of horses, seemed as though they had never been cultivated. The forests, cleared by the long continuance of the troops, partook likewise of the general desolation. But most horrible was the multitude of dead bodies, which deprived of burial fifty-two days scarcely retained the human form. As we traversed the fields of Borodino, my consternation was inexpressible, when I found the forty thousand men, who had perished there, yet lying exposed. The whole plain was entirely covered with them. None of the bodies were more than half buried. In one place were to be seen garments yet red with blood, and bones gnawed by dogs and birds of prey; in another were broken arms, drums, helmets, and swords. Fragments of standards lay scattered thick around, and from the emblems with which they were adorned, it was easy to judge how much the Russian eagle had suffered on that bloody day.

As our soldiers passed over the field of victory they shewed with pride the places which their different regiments had carried, and at almost every step related some valorous exploit, calculated to

Digitized by Google

flatter our national valour. On one side we saw the remains of the cottage at which Kutusoff had encamped; and more to the left, the famous redoubt. It yet frowned threateningly over the plain. It elevated itself like a pyramid in the midst of a desert. When I mused on what it had been, and what it then was, I imagined that I beheld Vesuvius in repose. Perceiving a soldier on a summit, his immoveable figure had in the remote distance the effect of a statue. "Ah!" I exclaimed, "if ever a statue is consecrated to "the demon of war, it should be placed on this "pedestal."

Continuing our march, we heard at a distance a feeble voice appealing to us for succour. Touched by his plaintive cries, some soldiers approached the spot, and to their astonishment saw a French soldier stretched on the ground with both his legs broken. "I was wounded," said he, "on the "day of the great battle. I fainted from the "agony which I endured, and on recovering my "senses, I found myself in a desolate place, "where no one could hear my cries, or afford "me relief. For two months I daily dragged "myself to the brink of a rivulet, where I fed "on the grass and roots, and some morsels of "bread which I found among the dead bodies. "At night I laid myself down under the shelter "of some dead horses. To day, seeing you at

Digitized by Google

" a distance, I summoned all my strength, and " happily crawled sufficiently near your route to " make myself heard." While the surrounding soldiers were expressing their surprise, the general, who was informed of an occurrence so singular and so touching, placed the unfortunate wretch in his own carriage.

My history would far exceed the bounds prescribed, were I to recount all the calamities which that atrocious war produced. I will relate one circumstance alone, from which my readers may judge of the rest. Three thousand prisoners were brought from Moscow. Having nothing to give them during their march, they were at night driven into a narrow fold like so many beasts. Without fire, and perishing with cold, they lay on the bare ice, and to assuage the hunger which tortured them, they eagerly devoured the horse-flesh which was occasionally distributed among them with a sparing hand. For want of time and means to dress it, they were obliged to eat it raw and bloody; and it is said, though I scarcely dare believe the assertion, when this disgusting food began to fail, many of the prisoners nightly fed on the flesh of their comrades, whom fatigue, misery, and famine, had destroyed.

But I turn from a picture so shocking, and pursue the course of my narrative. I shall soon have horrors enough to describe, which fell to

Digitized by Google

the lot of my friends and my companions in arms.

We repassed the Kologha, with as much precipitation as we had formerly crossed it under the auspices of victory. The descent which conducted to the river was so steep, and the frozen earth so slippery, that men and horses continually fell over each other. Happy would it have been for us, if the passage of other rivers, so often multiplied upon us, had not been even more dangerous than this.

We saw again the abbey of Kolotskoi. Despoiled of its former splendour, and surrounded by ruins, it resembled more an hospital than a convent. It was the only house which had been spared since our retreat from Moscow. It was given to the sick and wounded, who wished to breathe their last in its peaceful asylum.

The fourth division, forming always the advanced-guard, halted at a miserable village situated half a league to the right of the road between the abbey of Kolotskoi and Prokofévo. Of all the places of repose at which we had hitherto stopped, this was the most intolerable. Nothing remained but some wretched sheds, and the thatch had been torn from the roofs to give to the half-famished horses. The Prince and his staff were however constrained to pass the night here.

On the morrow (October 31st) we commenced

Digitized by Google

our march at an early hour, and being arrived at the heights of Prokofévo, we heard the sound of cannon so near us, that the Viceroy, fearing the Prince of Eckmuhl was pushed by the enemy, halted on one of the heights, and drew up his troops in order of battle to succour him. For some days the Emperor had complained of the slowness with which the first division proceeded, and blamed the system of retreat by echelons, adopted by their chief, affirming that it had lost three days' march, and had thus enabled the advanced-guard of Miloradowitch easily to overtake us. Finally, he alleged that we ought to pass rapidly over a country which did not afford the means of subsistence. The marshal, to whom misfortune rendered us unjust, might have replied, in his own justification, that too rapid a retreat would have redoubled the audacity of the enemy, who, strong in light cavalry, could at all times overtake us, and cut in pieces our rear-guard, if it had refused the combat. That excellent officer had already, in more fortunate times, proved that we might confidently rely on his skill, and he could now have added this maxim of war ;—"The more precipitate a retreat, the more fatal it bcomes," because the fear which it occasions in the minds of the soldiers, is more to be dreaded than any physical evils.

The Viceroy made every necessary disposition

Digitized by Google

on the heights of Prokofévo to succour the Prince of Eckmuhl, but soon understanding that that marshal was only harassed by the cossacks, he continued his march towards Ghiatz, always taking care that his divisions marched in the greatest order, and halting whenever it was possible that the Prince of Eckmuhl could want his support. It is impossible to give too much praise to Prince Eugene for his conduct in these critical circumstances. He was always the last of his column, and he now bivouacked a league on this side Ghiatz, that he might be ready to repel with promptness the attack of the enemy.

The night which the Prince and his staff passed here was the severest to which they had been exposed. They halted on a little hill near the place where formerly stood the village of Ivachkova. Not one house remained. The whole hamlet had been long since destroyed. To complete their sufferings, a violent and piercing wind arose. Not a tree afforded them shelter, and nature, in depriving that situation of wood, had refused the only resource which could mitigate the severity of the Russian climate.

Although our own sufferings were thus great, we were not insensible to those which our enemies endured: and when we approached Ghiatz in the morning, we felt the sincerest regret at perceiving that the whole town had disappeared. We should

Digitized by Google

have searched for it in vain, had it not been for the ruins of a few houses of stone, which shewed that this had once been a place of human habitation, and that we were not wandering amid the remains of a forest consumed by fire. Never were cruelty and revenge pushed so far. Ghiatz, contructed entirely of wood, vanished in a day, and left its former inhabitants, and even its enemies, to lament the fall of its industry, and the destruction of its prosperity. It was the most commercial and flourishing town in Russia. It contained many excellent manufactories of cloth and leather, and furnished the Russian navy with considerable quantities of tar, cordage, and marine stores.

The weather, which was piercingly cold in the night, was beautiful during the day; and the troops, though almost worn out by their sufferings, and exposed to privations of every kind, were full of courage and eager to meet the enemy. All seemed to feel that their only safety consisted in manfully struggling with the difficulties by which they were surrounded. They had, for many days, been reduced to subsist on horse-flesh: even the generals had begun to share the same food. The mortality of these animals was now regarded as a fortunate circumstance, and without this resource the soldier would have much more severely experienced the horrors of famine.

(November 1st). The cossacks, whose approach

Digitized by Google

we had dreaded, no longer delayed to realize our fears. Hitherto, while they had not been seen, the soldier marched with his accustomed confidence, and the baggage-waggons, feebly escorted, were so numerous that they formed many distinct convoys at considerable distances from each other. Near the ruined village of Czarevo-Saïmiché was a causeway about five hundred feet long where the great road formerly passed. The passage of the baggage-waggons and artillery had so worn it, that it was no longer practicable, and to continue our route, it was necessary to descend into a marshy meadow, intersected by a large river. The waggons which went first easily passed over the ice; but this being at length broken by the multitude which thronged over, it became necessary either to expose themselves to the greatest danger in attempting to ford the river, or to wait while some wretched bridges were constructed in haste. In the meantime, the head of the column being thus arrested, fresh carriages continually arrived. Artillery, baggage-waggons, and sutlers' carts, all crowded one on another, and the drivers profited by the momentary delay, to light their fires, and to chafe their limbs benumbed with the cold. While all was in this imagined security and complete confusion, the cossacks suddenly rushed from a thick wood on our left, uttering the most frightful cries, and precipitated themselves on the

Digitized by Google

convoy. Every one was panic-struck, and almost unconscious of what he did. Some ran to the woods; others fled to their carriages, and lashing their feeble horses, galloped in confusion over the plain. These were most to be pitied. The rivulets, the marshes, the slipperiness or the breaking of the ice, soon arrested their progress, and left them an easy prey to their pursuers. They were most fortunate who, taking advantage of the numerous carriages, intrenched themselves behind them, and awaited that deliverance which was not slow in arriving: for as soon as the cossacks perceived the infantry advancing upon them, they retreated, after having wounded a few of the drivers, and pillaged some of the ammunition-waggons.

The soldiers, to whom the care of escorting the baggage was intrusted, profited by the disorder which the presence of the cossacks excited, to pillage and destroy what they had sworn to defend. From that time dishonesty and theft spread themselves so rapidly and so universally through the army, that we were scarcely more secure amongst our own soldiers, than we should have been in the midst of the enemy. Whatever the soldiers took a fancy to, they availed themselves of some opportunity to purloin; and encouraged by the impunity with which they set all discipline at defiance, they procured more frequent opportunities to pillage,

Digitized by Google

by industriously spreading false alarms, and even imitating themselves the cry of the cossacks.

The royal guard was clearing the defile of Czarevo-Saïmiché when the baggage was attacked. It immediately received orders to halt, and while it rested on its arms, we saw some cossacks on our left, not two hundred paces from us, reconnoitring our situation. It was even said, that profiting by the intervals between some of our divisions, they frequently crossed our route. But their bravadoes, exercised with success on the followers of our camp, had no effects when attempted against the regular troops. When the royal guard saw the cossacks thus hovering on their flanks, they no longer continued their march, but halted near a wood not far from Vélitschevo. The other divisions encamped near the Viceroy, who remained constantly in the rear, since the Russians appeared so determined to harass our retreat.

(November 2d). On the morrow, three hours before day, we quitted our position. Our nocturnal march was truly terrifying. The night was fearfully dark, and afraid of running against one another, we were compelled to grope along our way with a slowness which gave us full leisure to indulge in the most melancholy reflections. In spite of our precaution, we often fell into the ditches on each side of the road, or were precipitated into the deep ravines by which it was in-

Digitized by Google

tersected. At length our impatience for the dawn became insupportable. We hoped that its cheering light would render our march less painful, and would protect us from the ambushes of an enemy, whose accurate knowledge of the country gave it a fatal advantage in all its manœuvres.

We were perfectly assured that we should soon be attacked. Those who were acquainted with the country, feared the position of Viazma, because they that knew the road from Medouin, which part of the Russian army had taken after the battle of Malo-Jaroslavitz, and which was shorter than ours, joined the great road near that city. They also regarded the cossacks who had appeared on the preceding evening, as the advanced-guard of the numerous cavalry of Platoff, and the two divisions of General Miloradowitch, which would suddenly burst upon us at Viazma.

Our pioneers and the equipage of the Viceroy were only a league from that city, and nothing yet betokened the presence of the enemy. In the meantime Prince Eugene being in the rear-guard with the first and fifth corps, and perceiving that the distance between the two extremities of his column hazarded the safety of the army, ordered the troops which were in advance to halt. In that interval, Colonel Labedoyère, aide-de-camp to his Highness, arrived from Viazma. When we heard the dangers to which that officer had been ex-

Digitized by Google

posed, we doubted not that on the morrow we should be compelled to force our way with the point of the bayonet.

The Viceroy halted at Fœdorovskoé, although he was expected at Viazma. The divisions of the army encamped around him. At his right, and facing the enemy, were the Poles, a little in front of the first corps. Although this corps formed our rear-guard, it had been so sharply pressed, that it was only a short distance from us. Prince Eugene had indeed delayed his march to form a junction with these troops.

(November 3d). Our divisions were on the march at six o'clock on the following morning. As we approached Viazma, and our baggage was already in that city, the cossacks shewed that they were indeed near us, by commencing a sudden and violent attack on some waggons which were drawn up round a little church, but the arrival of our troops soon put the enemy to flight. When however, we attempted to continue our march, the first brigade of the thirteenth division, commanded by General Nagle, which formed the rear-guard of our part of the army, was attacked on its left flank, a league and a half from Viazma. Numerous squadrons of Russian horse issued from the very road which we had dreaded, and threw themselves into the space which separated the fourth corps from the first. The Viceroy

Digitized by Google

perceiving the danger of his situation, suddenly halted his divisions, and recalled his artillery, that the well-directed fire of the batteries might check an enemy, all whose manœuvres tended effectually to cut off our retreat by possessing themselves of Viazma.

While these divisions executed divers evolutions to frustrate the plans of the Russians, they were followed by the first corps, and we remarked with regret that these troops, worn out by unheard-of sufferings and incessant combat, had lost that due subordination and undaunted courage which we had so often admired. The soldiers were regardless of discipline, and most of them being wounded, or sinking under fatigue, increased the crowd of mere camp-followers.

The fourth corps was thus left for a considerable time, to sustain alone, not only the charge of a numerous cavalry, but also the reiterated attacks of a body of Russian infantry, consisting of more than twelve thousand men. But at length the first corps having filed off behind us to the right of the road, took a position between Viazma and the point of attack, and thus relieved the troops of the fourth corps, which the Viceroy had caused to advance, at the beginning of the action. These were now enabled to occupy some advantageous positions on the right of the road, and thus, con-

Digitized by Google

jointly with the first corps, were ready to receive the attack, which the Russians again threatened.

Our fourteenth division, which had been in front of the thirteenth, suffered that division now to pass it, and relieved it by becoming the rear-guard. The fifteenth which had followed the fourteenth, remained with the royal guard, near Viazma, as a reserve. The order of battle being thus arranged, the enemy's infantry advanced, and the engagement commenced with considerable warmth, but with a decided superiority in artillery on the part of the Russians. The miserable state of our horses would not permit us to manœuvre our pieces with much celerity. It was in this engagement that Colonel Banco, aide-de-camp to the Viceroy, and commandant of the 2d regiment of Italian horse-chasseurs, had his head carried off by a cannon-ball.

Our troops, notwithstanding their inferiority, maintained their positions long enough for the baggage to pass through Viazma in the greatest order. A party of the enemy's cavalry then attempted to break through our two wings. That which during our retreat had advanced on our right, was repulsed by a body of infantry, furnished with cannon. The other, on our left, was equally repulsed by the Bavarian horse who were opposed to it, supported by some battalions of riflemen

Digitized by Google

concealed in the bushes with which the field of battle was covered.

This manœuvre of the Russians spread the greatest consternation among those whom either disease of body or want of courage had caused to quit their ranks and mingle with the followers of the camp. This description of persons was, unhappily, very numerous, principally among the cavalry, which was almost entirely dismounted. They were become worse than useless to us. In the perilous situation in which we then found ourselves, they constituted our greatest danger. They not only impeded all our manœuvres, but spread alarm and disorder on every side, by flying with precipitation before an enemy with which their cowardice would not permit them to fight. The cossacks, likewise, seeing this feeble and unarmed multitude flying before them, acquired fresh courage, and attacked us with redoubled ardour, believing that these columns of fugitives were the only troops with which they had to contend.

Although we repulsed every attack, our situation was becoming exceedingly critical, until the grand ravine situated at the left of our route, and above all, the excellent position which the Duke of Elchingen occupied, arrested the progress of the Russians. That marshal, being left the day before in a position near Viazma, to await the pas-

Digitized by Google

sage of the first corps, and take its place as rear-guard, had the glory of extricating us from the greatest danger to which we had hitherto been exposed. During the whole action he assisted in person, and continued to march with the Viceroy and the Prince of Eckmuhl, that he might confer with them on the measures which it was necessary to adopt.

It was nearly four hours after mid-day when our division passed through Viazma. Leaving the city, we saw the third division encamped on a little hill at our left. We owed much gratitude to that corps for having so well defended a situation so important. The bravery with which these troops maintained their ground, rendered the fierce and reiterated attacks of an enemy, superior in numbers, completely ineffectual, and contributed to save the first, fifth, and fourth corps from absolute destruction. The last division was thus enabled to accomplish its retreat behind the river of Viazma, where the Prince endeavoured to repair the disasters of a battle, unfortunate, but honourable, and sustained under circumstances in which the most skilful combinations could scarcely promise a favourable issue.

Traversing the forest at the foot of the hill of Viazma, we overtook a convoy of the sick and wounded, who had left Moscow before us. These unfortunate beings, after having been

Digitized by Google

many days deprived of medical assistance, and almost of food, encamped in this forest, which served them for an hospital and a grave. The horses had perished of fatigue and hunger, and their guards had forsaken these unhappy soldiers, and abandoned them to their fate. We encamped near them, and at the approach of night, kindled an enormous fire at the back of a little hill, covered with brushwood. The royal guard was round the tent of the Prince, the thirteenth and fourteenth divisions were placed on our flanks, while the fifteenth division, though considerably weakened, formed our rear-guard.

From this position the whole horizon appeared on fire. It was occasioned by the destruction of those houses at Viazma which had escaped the first conflagration. The third corps, which preserved its position to protect our retreat, although it was separated from the Russians by a river and by deep ravines, seemed to be frequently attacked. Often in the silence of the night, we were startled by the report of cannon, which, passing over the thick forests, sounded in a peculiarly mournful and horrible manner. The unexpected sound, repeated by the echoes of the valley, was lengthened into dismal reverberations; and often, when our harassed powers were sinking into calm and refreshing repose, suddenly roused us, while we hastily and fearfully ran to arms, expecting that

Digitized by Google

the enemy, whom we knew to be at hand, was advancing to surprise us.

(November 4th). At one o'clock in the morning the Viceroy deemed it prudent to profit by the obscurity of the night, and effect his retreat. He thus gained some hours' march on the Russians, with whom he could not fight, since famine would not permit us to remain one unnecessary day in a country completely depopulated and laid waste. We marched along the great road groping our way in the dark. The route was entirely covered with the fragments of carriages and artillery. Men and horses, worn out with fatigue, could scarcely drag themselves along, and as soon as the last fell exhausted, the soldiers eagerly divided the carcass among them, and hastened to broil on the coals that food, which for many days, had constituted their only nourishment. Suffering yet more from the cold than from hunger, they abandoned their ranks to warm themselves by a fire hastily kindled; but when they would rise to depart, their frost-bitten limbs refused their office, a partial insensibility crept over them, and they preferred falling into the hands of the enemy, rather than make a feeble effort to continue their journey.

Day had broken some time when we arrived at the village of Polianovo, near which ran the little river Osma. The bridge was very narrow and

Digitized by Google

bad. The crowd which had to pass it was immense. As every one eagerly rushed on to clear this narrow defile, the Viceroy was compelled to order the officers of his staff to interpose their authority, and to maintain some little order in so dangerous a place. He even condescended to stay himself, and to use every necessary precaution to facilitate the passage of the artillery in the midst of a crowd of carriages which pressed on towards the bridge. The Emperor who marched at a day's distance before us, halted between Jalkow Postoja-Dvor and Doroghoboui, when he heard that we were attacked; but as soon as he was informed that we had forced our passage, he proceeded to the latter village.

Beneath the town of Semlevo, ran another branch of the river Osma, more considerable than the first. The march of the troops was not however delayed. They profited by a bridge both large and solid to extricate themselves from a situation whence the enemy might have derived the greatest advantages, had they been able to gain possession of it.

Towards the close of the day, we found a shelter for the Prince in a little chapel situated near a marshy river. We had scarcely established ourselves round the chapel, when the camp-followers, having gone to forage, were attacked by the cossacks and fled back with precipitation.

Digitized by Google

Some had lost their horses, others their clothes, and many were covered with wounds from the sabre and the lance. It was necessary to think of retreating, and while the baggage of the Viceroy evacuated the position, we saw the troops of the enemy advancing towards us. In these circumstances, we were convinced how proper it was to secure well the passage of every river in a retreat. Although this river was small, it was scarcely fordable, and had no bridge. Men, horses, and waggons, precipitated themselves into the river with the utmost confusion. Our situation was the more deplorable, as the Russians, profiting by our distress, began to harass the rear of our column, and to spread consternation among the immense crowd which remained on the other side, and which hesitated to cross a deep and half-frozen river, whose banks were extremely boggy. During this interval we heard the balls of the enemy whistling over our heads, and threatening every moment to destroy us. With this exception the passage of the river presented nothing unfortunate. Night approached, and the cossacks discontinued their attacks. Our loss merely consisted of a few carriages, which we were compelled to leave in the middle of the water.

This obstacle being surmounted, we entered on a forest at the extremity of which, towards the

Digitized by Google

left, was a *chateau* long ago pillaged. We established ourselves there for the night, near the village of Rouibki. We had only horse-flesh to eat, except a little flour that had been brought from Moscow, and remained in one of the waggons. A very small quantity of this was given to each officer to make his *bouillie*. It was carefully measured out to every one with a spoon. As for our horses, we were well content if we could give them the straw which in our former passage had served them for litter.

(November 5th). Early in the morning we pursued our retreat, and, without any fatal rencontre with the enemy, arrived at a large village of which some houses had been spared. We particularly remarked a large house built of stone, and we designated that village by the name of the Stone-House*. We could rarely ascertain the names of the places through which we passed, and we described them in our journals by something characteristic, whether it referred to their situation, or form, or any peculiar hardships which we there endured. We spoke not of those at which we had suffered from hunger, for that was common to every village through which we marched.

* This village appears from the map to have been Jalkow Postoja Dvor.

Digitized by Google

Hitherto we had endured our misfortunes with calmness and resignation, buoyed up by the flattering hope that they would soon cease. When we departed from Moscow, we had regarded Smolensko as the limit of our retreat. There we trusted that we should rejoin the divisions left on the Dnieper and the Dwina, and taking these two rivers as the boundary of our operations should have Lithuania for our winter-quarters. We likewise pleased ourselves with the thought that Smolensko abounded in provisions of every kind; and that, to relieve us from the labours under which we were rapidly sinking, we should find there the ninth division, composed of twenty-five thousand fresh troops. This city was therefore the object of our fondest wishes, and our most pleasing dreams. Every one was anxious to arrive thither, persuaded that within its walls, the dreadful calamities which now environed us would for ever cease. The name of Smolensko passed from mouth to mouth, and each pronounced it with confidence to those who were sinking under their sufferings, as their truest, their only consolation. There was magic in the name. It carried with it a happy oblivion of all our past miseries, and inspired us with courage to support the fatigues which we were yet to encounter.

(November 6th). We marched towards Smo-

Digitized by Google

lenisko with an ardour which redoubled our strength; and approaching Doroghoboui, distant from that city only twenty leagues, the thought that in three days we should reach the end of all our misfortunes, filled us with the most intoxicating joy; when suddenly the atmosphere, which had hitherto been so brilliant, was clouded by cold and dense vapours. The sun, enveloped by the thickest mists, disappeared from our sight, and the snow falling in large flakes, in an instant obscured the day, and confounded the earth with the sky. The wind, furiously blowing, howled dreadfully through the forests, and overwhelmed the firs already bent down with the ice; while the country around, as far as the eye could reach, presented unbroken one white and savage appearance.

The soldiers, vainly struggling with the snow and the wind, that rushed upon them with tempestuous violence, could no longer distinguish the road; and falling into the ditches which bordered it, there found a grave. Others pressed on towards the end of their journey, scarcely able to drag themselves along. They were badly mounted, badly clothed, with nothing to eat, nothing to drink, shivering with the cold, and groaning with pain. Becoming selfish through despair, they afforded neither succour, nor even one glance of pity to those who, exhausted by fatigue and dis

Digitized by Google

ease, expired around them. On that dreadful day, how many unfortunate beings, perishing by cold and famine, struggled hard with the agonies of death! We heard some of them faintly bidding their last adieu to their friends and comrades. Others, as they drew their last breath, pronounced the name of their mothers, their wives, their native country, which they were never more to see. The rigour of the frost soon seized on their benumbed limbs, and penetrated through their whole frame. Stretched on the road, we could distinguish only the heaps of snow that covered them, and which, at almost every step, formed little undulations, like so many graves. At the same time vast flights of ravens, abandoning the plain to take refuge in the neighbouring forests, croaked mournfully as they passed over our heads; and troops of dogs, which had followed us from Moscow, and lived solely on our mangled remains, howled around us, as if they would hasten the period when we were to become their prey.

From that day the army lost its courage and its military attitude. The soldier no longer obeyed his officer. The officer separated himself from his general. The disbanded regiments marched in disorder. Searching for food, they spread themselves over the plain, burning and pillaging whatever fell in their way. No sooner

Digitized by Google

had the soldiers separated from the ranks, than they were assailed by a population eager to avenge the horrors of which it had been the victim. The cossacks came to the succour of the peasants, and drove back to the great road, already filled with the dying and the dead, those of the followers who escaped from the carnage made among them.

Such was the situation of the army, when we arrived at Doroghobouï. This little town would have given new life to our unfortunate troops, if Napoleon had not been so far blinded by rage, as to forget that his soldiers would be the first to suffer by the devastation which he caused to be made. Doroghobouï had been burnt, its magazines pillaged, and the brandy with which they were filled had been poured into the streets, while the rest of the army was perishing for want of it. The few houses which remained were occupied exclusively by a small number of generals and staff-officers. The few soldiers who yet dared to face the enemy, had little shelter from the rigours of the season, while the others, who had wandered from their proper corps, were repulsed on every side, and found no asylum in any part of the camp. How deplorable was then the situation of these poor wretches! Tormented by hunger, we saw them run after every horse the moment it fell. They devoured it raw, like dogs, and fought among themselves for the mangled limbs. Worn

Digitized by Google

out by want of sleep and long marches, they saw nothing around them but the snow; not one spot appeared on which they could sit or lie. Penetrated with the cold, they wandered on every side to find wood, but the snow had caused it entirely to disappear. If perchance they found a little, they knew not where to light it. Did they discover a spot less exposed than others, it afforded them but a momentary shelter, for scarcely had their fire kindled, when the violence of the wind, and the moisture of the atmosphere, suddenly extinguished it, and deprived them of the only consolation which remained in their extreme distress. In one place we saw a multitude of them, huddled together like beasts at the root of a beech, or pine, or under a waggon. Others were employed in tearing huge branches from the trees, or pulling down by main force, and burning the houses at which the officers lodged*. Although they were

* The unfortunate Paulowna, whom the reader will recollect when he calls to mind the pillage of Moscow, had hitherto accompanied us, and shared in all our misfortunes and privations. She endured them with the courage which her virtue inspired. Believing that she carried in her bosom a pledge of love which she imagined to be legitimate, she was eager to become a mother, and proud to follow her husband. But he, who had pledged himself to her by the most solemn promises, having been informed in the morning that we were not to take up our winter-quarters at Smolensko, determined to break a connexion which he had regarded as merely temporary. Inaccessible to pity, he ap-

Digitized by Google

exhausted by fatigue, they stood erect. They wandered like spectres through the livelong night, or stood immoveable around some enormous fire.

---

proached this innocent creature, and under some specious pretext, announced to her that they must part. At this intelligence she uttered a cry of surprise and horror, and frantically declared, that having sacrificed her family, and even her reputation for him whom she regarded as her husband, it was her duty to follow him; and that neither fatigues nor dangers should turn her from a resolution in which her love and her honour were equally interested. The general, little sensible of the value of an attachment so rare, coldly repeated, that they must part, since circumstances would no longer permit the women to remain with the troops; that he was already married; and that by returning speedily to Moscow, she might find the husband for whom her parents had destined her. At these cruel words his interesting victim felt almost annihilated. Paler than when she rushed from the tombs of the Kremlin, she uttered not a word; she sighed, she wept, and, suffocated by her grief, fell into a state of insensibility. Her perfidious seducer took advantage of this to withdraw from her presence, not because he was overpowered by his sensibility, he, alas! was a stranger to every tender and generous feeling, but to fly from the Russians, whose cries of vengeance he already fancied that he heard.—1*st. Edition.*

Digitized by Google

BOOK VIII.

KRASNOE.

When Napoleon quitted Moscow, he intended to reunite his troops between Witepsk and Smolensko, and make the Dnieper and the Dwina the grand line of his operations, whence he would proceed in the spring to attack at once Kiow and Petersburg *. The 6th and 7th of November having destroyed the third part of his army, he, on his arrival at Smolensko, alleged that destruction, and the inclemency of the winter, as the reasons of his abandoning his former design. But the true and only motive which induced him to change his plan, was the news which he received at Smolensko (9th November), that Wittgenstein had carried Polotsk by storm, and that Witepsk had been taken with its garrison. These two events caused so complete a change in the projects of the Emperor, that it will be proper to

* The twenty-fifth bulletin.

Digitized by Google

enter into some detail of the military operations which had taken place on the Dwina during our retreat.

The day on which we quitted Moscow, all the Russian armies that Napoleon had left in his rear put themselves in motion. That under the command of Count Wittgenstein, was principally to be dreaded, not only on account of its neighbourhood to the Beresina, but because it had just been reinforced by 17,000 recruits, and a division of old troops arrived from Finland. Marshal Gouvion Saint-Cyr who had been ordered to observe the operations of this army, had received no reinforcement, and had seen his troops rapidly diminished, not only by incessant combats, but by their long continuance in a miserable country, which during more than four months had been the scene of the most sanguinary operations.

Wittgenstein, favoured by so many advantages, began to act on the offensive, at the moment when our weakness would no longer permit us to hold him in check. At six o'clock in the morning (Oct. 18th) he marched upon Polotsk in four columns, and profiting by his numerical superiority, advanced to turn the position which Marshal Saint-Cyr occupied on the left bank of the Polota. His first attack was directed against one of our batteries advantageously placed, and which

Digitized by Google

it was necessary for us to preserve, whatever it might cost, unless we would expose to the enemy the weakest side of our intrenched camp towards Polotsk. The fortifications of this city were too imperfect to cover the extremity of our left, yet when they were attacked, they were defended by General Maison in a manner highly creditable to his skill, and to the courage of his troops *.

While the enemy briskly pressed General Maison, another of his columns marched to attack the division of Legrand in front, directing its principal efforts against a redoubt constructed on the left of the Polota, and which by the manœuvres of the Russians, was now become the centre of our division. All the efforts of the assailants were unavailing, and their courage expired under the destructive fire of our cannon.

During the whole of the day, Wittgenstein dared not to attempt the right bank of the Polota, where we were strongly intrenched, but about four o'clock in the afternoon, having concentrated all his forces, and being supported by a column newly arrived from Nevel, he advanced in great force by the roads of Riga, and Sebeï, and furiously attacked the left of the town. The Swiss,

* The eighth division, the command of which General Verdier had been compelled to resign on account of the wounds which he received in the first battle of Polotsk (Aug. 16th and 17th).

Digitized by Google

and the Croats of the division of Marle (the ninth), led away by their enthusiastic ardour, rushed forward to meet the enemy, and making a horrible massacre of the Russians, gloriously terminated the day, by retaining the position which they had been charged to defend. Thus Count Gouvion Saint-Cyr bravely repelled the attack of an enemy far superior in strength. He shrunk not from the unequal combat, as long as courage was of any avail. But it was with the utmost inquietude, that he observed the grand manœuvres which the enemy now prepared, in a level country where valour must finally yield to numbers. He had sent Corbineau during the night, on the borders of the Ouchatsck to secure his rear and to observe the movements of the corps of Stengel, who meant to turn the marshal by the left bank of the Dwina, while he was contending with Wittgenstein on the opposite bank. In his first *reconnaisance*, General Corbineau informed Count Gouvion Saint-Cyr, that he had only fallen in with some trifling parties of the enemy on the banks of the Ouchatsck; but about ten o'clock in the morning, he sent in great haste to apprise him, that he was opposed by five thousand infantry and twelve squadrons of cavalry. A regiment was immediately drafted from each of the divisions, unseen by Wittgenstein, and sent with the 7th cuirassiers under General Amey, to

Digitized by Google

reinforce the troops which Corbineau commanded.

The marshal then perceived that his situation was become critical, and that it was necessary to repass the Dwina; but wishing to conceal his retreat from the Russians, he gave orders that the preparations should not commence, till the close of day, and that the greatest silence should be observed. By this precaution he hoped to escape from those fatal obstacles, which the enemy would oppose to him, as soon as he was informed of the movement. Unfortunately, when night approached, some imprudent soldiers set fire to the tents of General Legrand, and the flames instantly spread through the whole line. Wittgenstein well knew that the manœuvres of the corps of Stengel, would compel us to retreat, and only waited the signal which marked its commencement, to repeat his attacks. He immediately comprehended that we had begun to fall back, and drawing out the whole of his artillery, directed it principally on Polotsk, hoping to set it on fire, and to prevent the escape of our ammunition-waggons, which must necessarily pass through the town. The troops who were in Polotsk, being protected by a double palissade, bravely defended themselves. They kept up a constant fire on the enemy and intrenched themselves behind some timber, and in some houses which

Digitized by Google

they had converted into redoubts. The bombardment was dreadful, and the fire of the batteries became general. The flames which rose on every side, shed a frightful glare over this nocturnal combat, and enabled both armies to manœuvre as in open day. The obstinacy with which either party fought was extreme, and although we had to contend with far superior forces, our rear-guard maintained their position, until the whole of our baggage and all our troops had repassed the Dwina.

Polotsk being evacuated about three o'clock in the morning, the Russian General Caranova immediately took possession of it. He found nothing but the wounded, lying in heaps on the field of battle. Their number attested the valour of our soldiers. But our forced retreat was yet more glorious, since in a situation so critical, and which threatened such disastrous results, the only trophy of which the Russians could boast, was one cannon, and that was purchased at a loss, which tripled ours. On the same day, the Russian staff had a grand dinner at the convent of the Jesuits. At the close of the repast Wittgenstein arose, and prompted by feelings which honoured both the conqueror and the conquered, gave the health of the brave Gouvion Saint-Cyr.

That marshal perceiving that he had not a moment to lose in opposing the troops which

Digitized by Google

advanced by the Ouchatsck, and which General Amey had held in check in the defiles of Sealitchtché, sent a column of 700 Bavarians to reinforce him. He gave the command of the whole detachment to General Wrede, who immediately advanced against the corps of Stengel. Having met with it, he furiously attacked it, and drove it to the other side of Honomiia, taking from 15 to 1800 prisoners, among whom were two colonels, and many officers of different ranks.

When Count Gouvion Saint-Cyr made his report of these bloody combats, sustained at a period so important, and under circumstances so disadvantageous, he rendered full justice to the talents and the bravery of Generals Wrede, Legrand, Merle, Maison, and Laurencey; he commended the skilful manner in which General Aubrey had manœuvred the artillery; he gave equal praise to the General of Engineers Dode, who had displayed the most eminent talents, and the most profound knowledge of his profession, and who was the more estimable, as being always our principal resource in desperate circumstances. Colonels Guébénene (wounded) and Dalbignac were not forgotten in the narration of an affair in which both had distinguished themselves by the exhibition of every quality that could constitute real merit. Lastly, the marshal informed the Emperor, that being wounded in

Digitized by Google

the fort, he was obliged to resign the command to General Legrand until the Duke of Reggio could arrive to assume it.

Such were the events which occurred on the Dwina, while the grand army effected its retreat to Smolensko; events honourable to our arms, but disastrous, by the consequences which inevitably followed. Wittgenstein, having passed the Dwina, detached some troops on his left, who captured Witepsk. He opposed the corps of Stengel to the Bavarians on his right, and with the rest of his army pursued the division of which the duke of Reggio had taken the command. To support that marshal, who was scarcely able to hold Wittgenstein in check, Napoleon was compelled to send the Duke of Belluno with orders to endeavour to force the Russians to repass the Dwina; a fatal expedition, in which that corps was completely destroyed by famine and the rigour of the season. Had it remained till our arrival at Misteslaol, where it was comfortably cantoned, it might have been successfully opposed to Tschikagow, and might have encouraged the corps of Schwartzenberg, consisting of thirty thousand Austrians, to resist the attacks of the army of Wolhynia. Thus by defending Minsk, and preventing the enemy from advancing on the road of Borisov, the Austrians would have preserved the French army from all the horrors

Digitized by Google

which it experienced on the banks of the Beresina. Our chief learned all these manœuvres by intercepted letters, but he was unable to prevent them. The consequences which were expected to follow from them, were so important, that the Russians openly avowed the intention of taking Napoleon alive, and putting the whole of his army to the sword. We, however, were kept in profound ignorance of these hostile movements, and reckoning on the resistance which the corps that protected our flanks, would oppose to the enemy, we confidently expected the termination of our sufferings, at precisely the very place at which they became absolutely insupportable.

It was not therefore the severity of a premature winter that rendered the plans of Napoleon abortive, because if he could have maintained himself between Smolensko and Witepsk, he would easily have repaired the losses which he had hitherto suffered. The principal, and the only cause of his ruin, was his determination to proceed to Moscow without considering the forces which he left in his rear, and his persisting to effect, at the price of our blood, that which the most headstrong and imprudent monarch* had

* Charles XII. of Sweden, to whom Napoleon constantly applied the epithet of "the fool."

Digitized by Google

not dared to attempt. The desire of pillaging that capital, and the ambition of dictating his laws there*, made him sacrifice every thing. He rushed on, eager to destroy the ancient palace of the Czars, forgetful of the winter and all its horrors; forgetful that Wittgenstein had never abandoned the Dwina; and that Tschikakoff, returned from Moldavia, would attack him on his return from his foolish expedition.

Napoleon, ignorant as yet of the progress which the enemy had made on the Dwina, determined that the fourth corps should pass the Dnieper, and march on Witepsk, to effect a junction with the garrison of that town commanded by General Pouget. After reconnoitring whether the approach of winter had still left this route practicable, General Samson was ordered to traverse the country, and examine particularly the banks of the Wop. The Engineers Delahaye, Laignelos, and Guibert, accompanied him.—These officers had scarcely passed the Dnieper, when they fell into the hands of a party of cossacks by whom all these rivers were infested.

(November 7th). While the fourth corps proceeded in the direction of Witepsk, we left Doroghobouï, and passed the Dnieper on a bridge of

* He only gave them to the French comedians. See his regulations concerning the theatres, dated Moscow, October 15th, and inserted in the Moniteur, January 15, 1813.

Digitized by Google

rafts near that village. The horses found the greatest difficulty in climbing the opposite bank. The road was become as slippery as glass, and these animals, already exhausted, were no longer able to draw. Twelve or sixteen horses harnessed to one cannon had scarcely strength to drag it over the smallest hill. It was intended to proceed the first day as far as Zazelé; but the road was so execrably bad, that even on the following morning, the waggons had scarcely reached the sixth league. Many cannon and horses were of necessity abandoned; and it was on that cruel night that the soldiery, no longer under control, began to pillage the baggage. The ground was covered with portmanteaus, boxes, and papers; and many articles stolen from Moscow, which some remains of shame had hitherto concealed, once more saw the light.

The beautiful *chateau* of Zazelé presented us during the night with a repetition of the scenes of yesterday. With the exception of those whom the pillage of the waggons had reanimated, we saw nothing on every side but men dying of hunger and of cold; and horses tormented by thirst, endeavouring to break the ice with their feet, to find that water which we were unable to give them.

(November 8th). Our baggage was so considerable that the losses which it had sustained

Digitized by Google

were yet scarcely felt. We marched with much alacrity all day, for we thought that having quitted the great road of Smolensko, and pursued one that had experienced less of the calamities of war, we might find some villages to shelter us from the inclemency of the night, where our famished troops might obtain refreshment, and especially where we might procure some forage for our meagre horses. But this flattering hope soon vanished. The village of Sloboda, at which we were to sleep, presented us with new horrors. Every thing was destroyed; and the cossacks, hovering on our flanks, seized and pillaged, or massacred, every one who, urged by necessity, wandered but a little way from the ranks to seek for food. In these dreadful circumstances General Dauthouard, whose talents had before proved so useful, appeared to multiply himself, and to be present wherever danger threatened. He caused our artillery to act with effect, on every point where it could be brought to bear; when, as he was passing our lines, a cannon-ball fractured his right thigh, after having killed the orderly soldier by his side.

The Viceroy, knowing that we ought to cross the Wop on the following day, had sent General Poitevin forward in the night, with some engineers, to construct a bridge for our passage. We arrived on the banks of the river at an early hour

Digitized by Google

on the morrow, and to the great grief of the Prince, and our utter despair, saw the whole army and the baggage ranged along the Wop, without being able to pass it. The bridge had been begun and nearly finished, but the waters had suddenly increased during the night, and so injured it, that it was neither possible to avail ourselves of it, or to repair it.

The cossacks, whom we had seen the night before, did not fail to advance upon us when they were apprised of our critical situation. We already heard the fire of our riflemen, who endeavoured to keep them in check; but the noise of the fire-arms rapidly approaching, convinced us that the audacity of the enemy increased at the view of our dangers. In the meantime the Viceroy, whose noble soul was always calm in every emergency, maintained a presence of mind most important in circumstances so desperate. To re-animate the spirits of the soldiers, who were more terrified at the presence of the cossacks than at the dangers of the Wop, he despatched some chosen troops, who repulsed the Russians on our flanks and on our rear, and left us at liberty to attempt the passage of the river.

The Prince, seeing that it was necessary for some officer of rank to set an example of courage in crossing first, ordered Colonel Delfanti to place himself at the head of the royal guard, and to pass

Digitized by Google

the ford of the Wop. That brave officer, whose intrepidity cannot be too highly praised, embraced with ardour this opportunity of shewing his devotion to the service; and in sight of all our corps, with the water reaching to his waist, made his way through the accumulated ice, at the head of the grenadiers, and surmounted every difficulty.

The Viceroy immediately followed with his staff, and having arrived at the other side, issued the necessary orders to facilitate a passage so dangerous. The waggons now began to file off. The first passed happily over, and after them a few pieces of artillery. But as the channel was far below the level of the ground, and the banks steep and glittering with ice, the only practicable point was where a gentle declivity had been dug to descend to the river. The cannon all following in the same track, formed ruts so deep that it was impossible to drag them out. Thus the only accessible ford was soon choked up, and rendered utterly impassable for the rest of the artillery and baggage.

In this situation every one yielded to despair; for, notwithstanding the efforts made by our rear-guard to repulse the Russians, it was but too evident that they advanced. Our very fear doubled our danger. The river was only half frozen, and as the waggons could not possibly

Digitized by Google

cross it, they who had no horses were forced to wade through the stream. Our situation was the more deplorable, as we were compelled to abandon a hundred pieces of cannon, and a great number of ammunition and provision waggons, carts, and *drouschki**, which contained the little that remained of the provisions of Moscow. As soon as the necessity became thus apparent, every one abandoned his vehicle, and hastily loaded his horse with his most valuable effects. But scarcely had any one resolved to leave his carriage, than a crowd of soldiers gave the owner no time to select what he thought proper. They violently seized on it, and in a moment pillaged it of every thing which it contained, principally searching for flour and brandy. The artillery-men abandoned their pieces, and on the report that the enemy rapidly approached, immediately spiked them, despairing to convey them across a river, every part of which was choked with waggons sticking fast in the clay, and the bodies of innumerable soldiers and horses, who had been carried away by the torrent. The cries of those who were crossing the river, the consternation of others who were preparing to descend, and whom we every moment saw precipitated into the current, and finally the distraction of the women, the shrieks of the children,

* An elegant little carriage much used at Moscow.

Digitized by Google

and the terror even of the soldiers, rendered this passage a scene so horrible, that the very recollection yet terrifies those who witnessed it.

Although it is most painful to retrace the dreadful events of that day, I cannot prevail on myself to forbear recounting one trait of maternal love, so touching, and so honourable to human nature, that the sight of it compensated for the affliction which those unfortunate beings occasioned me.

A female sutler of our corps, who had been with us during the whole campaign, returned from Moscow, carrying in a waggon five young children and all the fruit of her industry. Arrived at the Wop, she regarded with horror the rapid stream which compelled her to leave on its banks all her little fortune and the future subsistence of her children. For a long time she ran up and down, eagerly looking for a new passage, then returning in despair from her fruitless search, she said to her husband, "We must "indeed abandon all; let us now try only how "to save our children." Saying this, she took the two youngest from the waggon, and placed them in her husband's arms. I saw the poor father closely hug the innocent creatures, and with a trembling foot traverse the river, while his wife falling on her knees at the edge of the water,

Digitized by Google

now gazed eagerly on him, and then raised her eyes to heaven; but as soon as she saw him safely landed, she lifted her hands in gratitude to Providence; and leaping on her feet, exclaimed with transport, "They are saved, they are saved." The anxious father, depositing his precious burden on the bank, hastened back, seized on two more of them, and again plunging into the waves, being followed by his wife, who bore the fifth on one arm, and with the other hand clung fast to her husband, reached the shore in safety. The children who had been first carried over, thinking themselves abandoned by their parents, made the air resound with their cries, but their tears soon ceased to flow, when the affectionate family was again reunited.

The evening approaching, we quitted this place of desolation, and encamped near a wretched village half a league from the banks of the Wop, whence we often heard, in the middle of the night, the lamentable cries of those who were yet attempting the passage. We had left the fourteenth division on the other side to hold the enemy in check, and to endeavour to save some part of the immense baggage which we had abandoned. I was sent on the morrow to recall this division, and was thus enabled to perceive all the extent of our loss. For more than a league,

Digitized by Google

nothing was to be seen on the road and the banks of the river, but ammunition-waggons, pieces of artillery, and the most elegant carriages. The articles with which the waggons had been filled, and that were too heavy to be carried away, were heaped on every side. I saw many figures of antique bronze chandeliers of the greatest value, original and exquisite paintings, and the richest and most esteemed porcelain. I perceived among the rest a cup of the most beautiful workmanship, on which was depicted the sublime composition of Marcus Sextus. I took it, and drank from it some of the water of the Wop full of dirt and ice. After I had thus used it, I cast it from me with indifference near the place were I had found it.

Our troops had scarcely quitted the other bank when clouds of cossacks, no longer finding any opposition, advanced to the river. They found too many unhappy wretches who, feeble and diseased, had been unable to pass the ford. Although our enemies were absolutely surrounded and oppressed with plunder, they stripped these miserable beings, and left them naked on the snow. As we stood on the opposite bank, we could see the cossacks sharing among themselves the bloody spoils. If their courage had equalled their love of pillage, the Wop would not have defended us from their attacks. But these

Digitized by Google

cowardly assailants were always stopped by a few bayonets, or contented themselves with firing at us a few cannon-shot, which indeed too frequently reached our ranks.

The last night had been truly dreadful. To form some idea of it, the reader must picture to himself an army encamped on the bare snow, in the midst of the severest winter, closely pursued by the enemy, and having neither artillery nor cavalry to oppose to him. The soldiers, without shoes, and almost without clothes, were enfeebled by fatigue and famine. Sitting on their knapsacks, they slept on their knees. From this benumbing posture they only rose to broil some slices of horse-flesh, or to melt a few morsels of ice. Even the wood often failed us, and to make their fires, our troops destroyed the very houses in which the generals lodged; and often when we awoke in the morning, the village that we had seen the night before, had disappeared, while whole towns, which to-day were untouched, would form on the morrow one vast conflagration. In the midst of these sufferings the Viceroy, always at our head, preserved a calm and unruffled countenance. Enduring comparatively far greater privations than we, he was always cheerful, and retained his presence of mind though surrounded by the most urgent dangers, offering in his own person the most perfect model of military discipline.

Digitized by Google

The cossacks, perceiving that we had quitted our position, soon crossed the river and attacked our rear. The fourteenth division, which had preserved twelve pieces of cannon, formed the rear-guard, and repulsed the enemy. In the meantime, the Prince and his officers endeavoured to reduce to some order, and entice back to their ranks, those soldiers whom misery had forced to leave their colours to search for food. But they attempted this without success. The number of the stragglers was so great that it was impossible either to arrest or check them. Even when some had returned to their duty, the desertion soon recommenced. Hunger, imperious hunger, seduced them again from their colours, and threw all our columns into confusion. The more enfeebled we became, the more enterprising were our adversaries. Their attacks on our rear-guard were almost incessant, and we were frequently compelled to halt, and contend against superior forces, which endeavoured to overwhelm us on every side.

The rear of our column was briskly pressed, when the royal guard which formed its head was stopped before Dukhovchtchina by some squadrons of cossacks, who, issuing from the town, deployed in the plain, as if they would surround us. Seeing that we were thus pressed on every side, our corps fell into such disorder, that it resem-

Digitized by Google

bled one immense crowd, half of which were sick and disarmed. In the meantime the enemy maintained his ground on one side of us, and on the other attacked us with vigour. But the Prince, ever preserving his courage unbroken, formed the Italian guard and the Bavarian dragoons and light horse into a square, which marching in platoons drove back the cossacks and permitted us to enter Dukhovchtchina. The thirteenth division was formed in column close to these troops, in spite of the multitude of stragglers, who pressing round our battalions, impeded every manœuvre. That he might accelerate the march of the army the Prince himself watched during the night, and superintended the repair of an old bridge which arrested our progress. To encourage the engineers, he even condescended to assist at the work, while every privation to which he exposed himself, rendered him dearer to those whom he commanded.

The little town of Dukhovchtchina, through which our army had not before passed*, had escaped the general destruction. The inhabitants, flying at our approach, left us some provisions, which we eagerly collected, coarse as they were. But that which rendered them most

* Excepting the cavalry commanded by General Grouchy, and the division of Pino when it returned from Porietsch.

Digitized by Google

precious was the opportunity of preparing them in some human habitation, and enjoying for a little while a shelter from the excessive cold of a piercing wind.

The Viceroy had on the preceding evening ordered his aide-de-camp Betaille to take with him the 15th division, and proceed by the nearest road to Smolensko to announce to Napoleon the disasters which we had experienced on the Wop. To await the reply of the Emperor, and to know whether we were yet to continue our march upon Witepsk, we were permitted to enjoy one day's rest at Dukhovchtchina (11th November). But when that officer did not return, it was determined that we should recommence our march at two o'clock on the following morning. We had been undisturbed during the whole of the day, but at ten o'clock at night, while we were indulging in a sweet repose to which we had been so long unaccustomed, the cossacks appeared before the town, and directed their artillery on the fires round which our soldiers were sleeping. Many picquets were surprised; those of the 106th regiment, placed before a church, suffered considerable loss; but the presence of the Viceroy soon repaired the disorder which so unexpected an attack had occasioned. The troops were immediately collected, and occupied every position

Digitized by Google

which could be favourable to us in a nocturnal encounter. This attack was followed by nothing of consequence, for it was made by the cossacks, who took care to be far enough away when they perceived that we were taking measures to punish their temerity.

(November 12th). The hour of departure being arrived, we set fire to Dukhovchtchina, whose houses had been so useful to us. Although sufficiently accustomed to all the effects of a conflagration, we could not restrain our astonishment at the horrible, yet superb spectacle, which it now presented, amid the shades of a forest covered with snow, and strangely illumined by torrents of flames. The trees were covered with a sheet of ice, which dazzled the sight, and produced, as with a prism, the most vivid and variegated colours. The branches of the birch, drooping to the ground like the weeping willow, appeared like beautiful chandeliers, while the icicles, melted by the heat, seemed to scatter around us a shower of brilliant and sparkling diamonds.

In the midst of a scene full of splendid horror our troops reunited, and proceeded from the town on the road to Smolensko. Although the night was unusually dark, the flames that ascended from the neighbouring villages, which had been also destroyed, formed so many auroræ-borealeş,

Digitized by Google

and till the dawn of day shed a frightful glare upon our march. Beyond Toporovo, the road of Pologhi, which we had followed when we came from Smolensko to Doroghobouï, was on our left. The snow that covered all the country, had nearly buried the villages, which formed from afar only a few black spots on one boundless surface of white. The difficulty of approaching them saved many from the general desolation. When I compared these peaceful asylums with the torments to which we were a prey, I could not refrain from exclaiming, "Happy people! exempt from "ambition, you live tranquil and undisturbed, "while we are fast sinking under the most frightful calamities. The winter preserves your existence, but it devotes us to death. When the "sweet spring shall have accomplished your deliverance, you will see our carcasses bleaching "the plain, and you will be doubly happy in "having suffered so little from our tyranny, and "in having added nothing to the weight of our "misfortunes."

The little river Khmost was frozen when we crossed it, and the bridge, which was yet entire, enabled us to pass on without delay or danger. Arriving at Wolodimerowa, the Viceroy established himself in a *chateau* a little above the village, where he had lodged on our former march. We had no doubt that the cossacks, who had flanked

Digitized by Google

our route during the day, would halt on a height not far distant from us, and accordingly they soon drove in our foragers, who, urged by imperious necessity, had spread themselves through the neighbouring villages which had not been entirely ravaged in search of food.

(November 13th). We were now only one day's march from Smolensko, where abundance would succeed to want, and repose to fatigue. Impatient to enjoy a happiness so long desired, we left Wolodimerowa long before day, and burned, as was our custom, the cottages which had afforded us shelter. Having arrived at the heights of Stabna, where the road of Dukhovchtchina joins that of Witepsk, we experienced an almost insuperable difficulty in ascending the mountain: wherever we attempted to climb it, we found one solid mass of ice, bright, and slippery as glass. Men and horses rolled over one another; and, happy were they, who, after the utmost exertion, could extricate themselves from the dreadful pass.

Before we arrived at Smolensko, where we trusted that all our misfortunes would terminate, the most melancholy scenes presented themselves every instant, and increased our eagerness to reach that city, the object of our most ardent prayers. Among the sports of cruel fortune, none had more cause to complain than the French women, who, following us from Moscow to escape the

Digitized by Google

vengeance of the Russians, hoped to find with us certain protection. Most of them on foot, with shoes of stuff, little calculated to defend them from the frozen snow, and clad in old robes of silk, or the thinnest muslin, were glad to cover themselves with tattered pieces of military cloaks, torn from the dead bodies of the soldiers. Their situation would have drawn tears from the hardest hearts, if dire necessity had not stifled in every bosom the feelings of humanity.

Of all the victims of the horrors of war, no one inspired warmer pity than the young and interesting Fanny. Beautiful, affectionate, amiable, and sprightly, speaking many different languages, and possessing every quality calculated to seduce the most insensible heart, she now begged for the most menial employment, and the morsel of bread which she obtained drew from her rapturous expressions of gratitude. Imploring succour from us all, she was compelled to submit to the vilest abuse, and, though her soul loathed the prostitution, she every night belonged to him who would charge himself with her support. I saw her when we quitted Smolensko. She was no longer able to walk. She was clinging behind a carriage, and was thus dragged along. At length her powers were quite exhausted. She fell on the snow, and there remained unburied, without exciting one emotion of compas-

Digitized by Google

sion, or obtaining one look of pity. But what need of more testimonies of the calamities which befell us; we were all fellow-sufferers.

It was horrible to see and to hear the enormous dogs with shaggy hair, which, driven from the villages that we had burned, followed us along our march. Dying with hunger, they uttered one incessant and frightful howl, and often disputed with the soldiers the carcasses of the horses which fell on our route. In addition to this, the ravens, with which Russia abounds, attracted by the scent of the dead bodies, hovered over us in black and innumerable clouds, and by their cries of mournful presage, struck the stoutest hearts with terror.

We at length arrived within two leagues of Smolensko, and the tower of its celebrated church, which we already saw at a distance, flattering us with the sweetest illusions, seemed the most lovely object in the whole perspective. We left the fourteenth division in the rear, with the few Bavarian horse that remained, to observe and hold in check the cossacks, who, increasing in number every moment, seemed determined to follow us to the very walls of the city. But what was our consternation when we learned in the very suburbs of the city, that the ninth corps was gone, that it had not even halted at Smolensko, and that the provisions were all con-

Digitized by Google

sumed? A thunderbolt falling at our feet would have confounded us less than did this news. Our senses were for a moment suspended. We would not believe the fact; but our eyes soon gave us sad confirmation of the truth, when we saw the garrison of Smolensko eagerly rushing out, and immediately devouring the horses which every moment dropped, exhausted with fatigue and hunger. We then no longer doubted that famine reigned in that city, to which we had eagerly looked as the abode of plenty.

As we were musing on the sadness of our lot, its rigour was somewhat alleviated by the promise of a little rice, flour, and biscuit, which yet remained in the magazines. The hope of this reanimated our drooping courage; when suddenly we were filled with new consternation. We had scarcely arrived within the gates of Smolensko, when crowds of stragglers, covered with blood, rushed upon us, and announced that the cossacks were only two hundred paces distant. The next moment, Captain Tressel, aide-de-camp to General Guilleminot, who had been left behind with the fourteenth division, came at full speed. He apprised us that that division had taken up a position in a village, in a wood which commanded the road; that the enemy had surrounded it, but that being perfectly intrenched round a *chateau*, whose park was encircled with palli-

Digitized by Google

sades, the cossacks despaired of attacking them with success, and retired to fall upon the stragglers; that they had speedily overtaken these unhappy beings, had massacred some, and wounded a great number. The road was covered with these miserable wretches, and presented a spectacle well calculated to excite our liveliest compassion. We saw them, moreover, at a distance, descending the mountain of Smolensko. The declivity was so rapid, and the frost had rendered it so slippery, that many of these unfortunate beings, unable to support themselves, rolled down the precipice, and inevitably perished.

Having left the royal guard on this height to protect the division of Broussier which formed the rear-guard, we descended toward the Dnieper, and endeavoured to enter the city. Beyond the bridge was the junction of the road of Doroghoboui with that from Valentina, which all the other divisions had taken; and as these corps had not passed the Wop, they yet retained a great part of their artillery and baggage. The numerous carriages which flocked in on every side, mingled with the foot-soldiers and the cavalry; and all of them attempting to rush into Smolensko, where they had been promised some rations of bread, the greatest confusion ensued. The entrance was completely choked up, and

Digitized by Google

more than three hours elapsed ere we could penetrate into the city.

(November 13). The wind was tempestuous, and the cold excessive. We were assured that the thermometer was more than twenty-two degrees below the freezing point. Notwithstanding this, every one ran into the streets, hoping that he might be able to purchase provisions. Smolensko was built on the side of a mountain, and the ascent was so slippery, that it was necessary to crawl on our knees, and to hold by the rocks which projected above the snow, in order to gain the summit. We at length reached the top, where we found the great square, and those houses which had suffered least from the conflagration. Although the weather was insupportably severe, we sought rather for food than for lodging. Some soldiers of the garrison, to whom a little bread had been distributed, were compelled by force to sell it to us. Others immediately entreated those who had bought it, to afford them a share, and soldiers and officers, mingled together, were ravenously devouring in the streets every kind of provision which they could procure, however coarse or disgusting. In the meantime the cossacks arrived. We distinctly perceived them scouring the heights, and firing on the troops which defiled below the town.

Digitized by Google

We had great difficulty in finding shelter, for the houses were few, and the crowd, which was to occupy them, immense. At length, heaped one upon another in the great halls whose arches had defied the flames, we waited with impatience for the distribution of the bread. But the formalities necessary to be gone through were so long, that night came on ere any thing was delivered. We were now compelled to run anew into the streets, and, with money in our hands, seek in the quarters of the imperial guard for something to support our existence. They were more favoured than the rest of the army, and often rolled in abundance when we were destitute of every comfort.

Thus, Smolensko, which we had thought would have been the termination of our misfortunes, cruelly deceived our dearest hopes, and became the witness of our greatest disgrace, and our most profound despair. The soldiers who could not find a shelter, encamped in the middle of the streets, and, some hours after, were found dead around the fires which they had kindled. The hospitals, the churches, and the other public buildings, were unable to contain the sick, who presented themselves by thousands. These unhappy beings, exposed to all the rigours of a frosty night, lay uncovered on the waggons, or in the ammunition-carts, or perished in vainly

Digitized by Google

searching for an asylum. In fine, when every thing had been promised us at Smolensko, nothing had been provided to enable us to maintain ourselves there; nothing had been prepared to relieve and comfort an army whose salvation depended on that place alone. Hence despair seized upon us. We thought only how to save our wretched existence. Honour and duty were forgotten, or rather, we were no longer disposed to submit to the commands of a rash sovereign, who troubled not himself to provide bread for those who had sacrificed their lives to gratify his ambition *.

The gayest, and the most intrepid, now entirely lost their character. They predicted only disasters and dangers†. One thought occupied their minds—that country which they were never again to see. One object filled their view—that death which every moment threatened them. With a mournful presentiment, each inquired tremblingly, and with the most profound mystery, where were the armies to which we looked for deliverance? "Where is the Marshal Gou-

* We had been told that 20,000 waggons, laden with biscuit and flour, and drawn by 40,000 men, were provided for the support of the army. Very few of these reached Smolensko; and the oxen which did arive there, were so diseased by fatigue, and bad food, that the physicians forbade the army to eat them.

† See the Twenty-ninth Bulletin.

Digitized by Google

" vion Saint Cyr?" one secretly asked his companion.—" He wished to have protected the " Dwina, but he was forced to abandon Polotsk, " and to fall back upon Lessel," was the whispered reply.—" And where is the Duke of Bel- " luno?"—" He could not reach the Oula."—" And " where the Russian army of Wolhynia?"—" It " has driven Prince Schwartzenberg behind the " Bug; it has made itself master of Minsk, and " is advancing against us."—" Ah! if this news " be true," repeated the first to himself, " our " situation is truly desperate; and one great " battle, on the borders of the Dnieper or the " Beresina, will complete our ruin."

Reflections, if possible, more depressing occupied and tormented us, when a confused murmur spread through the camp, that the whole of France was agitated; that the towns of Nantes and Caen had been destroyed, and that Paris, where, during nearly twenty years, the fate of Europe had been decided, was also in a state of commotion, which made us tremble for the fate of our beloved country! We were informed that certain men, known for their love of democracy, had conceived the project of spreading a false report of the death of Napoleon, and the entire destruction of his army; and that profiting by the grief and consternation which this news would occasion, it was their intention to overthrow the

Digitized by Google

existing authorities, and to erect a government which would be subservient to their views. If this design had been conceived by honest and patriotic men, who, emulous to render themselves illustrious by the deliverance of their country, sought only to throw off the yoke that they might preserve the French people from the disgrace of hereafter owing their freedom to those whom they called their enemies, such a project would have been truly heroic. But, instead of an enterprise so noble, we were told that the conspirators wished to deliver us from despotism, that they might plunge us into the horrors of anarchy. Far from wishing success to such a conspiracy, we rejoiced when we were afterwards informed, that our country was saved from the fury of the different factions, for the political perfidy of our oppressor had caused the fate of the people to depend solely on his safety. By his monstrous Machiavelism, France was at war with the whole human race, that the preservation of France might be connected with that of his own person.

As we lay under some wretched thatch, and indulged in many a melancholy reflection, we were suddenly roused by an unexpected cry of "Rise, rise; they pillage the magazines." Springing immediately on our feet, and seizing a sack, a pannier, or a bottle, we exclaimed to each other, as we rushed out, "I will go to the

Digitized by Google

" flour magazine, you go to the magazine of " brandy; let the servants run to the place where " the meat, the biscuit, the pease, are kept." In an instant the room was empty. After a considerable interval our friends returned and informed us, that the soldiers, dying with hunger, and no longer able to await the dilatory distribution of the provisions, had overpowered the guard, forced the gates of the magazines, and begun to pillage them. Some came back with their clothes covered with flour, and even pierced with the bayonet, bearing on their shoulders sacks of flour, which they had taken by force from the soldiers who were dividing it. Others entered, harassed with fatigue, and deposited on the table a great pannier of biscuit, or what was better, an enormous leg of beef. An hour after, the servants followed them bringing rice, pease, and brandy. At the unexpected view of such abundance our hearts once more expanded. One laughed with joy as he kneaded his bread; another sung as he cooked his meat; but most of them, eagerly seizing the brandy, quickly caused the wildest gaiety to succeed to the most distressing sadness.

Although the weather was beautifully clear, the air was so exceedingly piercing, that it froze us as we passed the streets. At every step were seen the dead bodies of the soldiers stretched on

Digitized by Google

the snow, who, harassed by fatigue, had perished of cold as they were searching for a place of repose. • All these disasters, and especially our stay at Smolensko, remind me of the death of Colonel Battaglia, commandant of the guard of honour of Italy. At this epoch, that corps was completely annihilated, and, ere I quit the fatal walls of Smolensko, I will succinctly recount its history.

It was composed of young men selected from the first families in Italy, and whose parents allowed them a pension of twelve hundred francs when they entered the corps. It was an honour to be admitted into the regiment, as its very name testified. It was not rare to find among these young men the most brilliant talents united to the most affluent fortune. Many of them were the only sons of illustrious families. To the titles which they derived from their ancestors, they added a well-cultivated understanding, and every quality which promised ultimately to form the most distinguished military characters. In this school were educated the best informed and the most excellent officers of the Italian army. They acquired experience in submitting to the rules of their corps, which, while it gave them the rank of sub-lieutenants, obliged them to perform the service of private soldiers.

This corps conducted itself well on every oc-

Digitized by Google

casion, and was remarkable for its fine appearance and strict discipline, but it suffered more than any other by the privations attendant on disastrous retreat.. The guards of honour, unused to shoe their horses, or to mend their garments or their boots, were obliged to submit to these degradations, when the artificers and servants attached to their regiments were no more. Having lost all their horses, and wearing enormous and heavy boots, they were unable long to support the fatigue of our continual marches. Confounded with the stragglers, they remained in the rear, without food and without lodging. In this manner the descendants of the noblest families, and born to the happiest destinies, perished far more miserably than the common soldiers; for their education and their habits ill-disposed them to submit to the menial offices by which others gained a scanty morsel, and prolonged a wretched life. Some of them were seen wrapped in the tattered fragments of their cloaks; others, mounted on sorry cognias*, suddenly fainted from weakness and want, and fell to rise no more. Out of the 350 of which they were originally composed, all except eight perished in

* Cognia, in the Polish language, signifies a horse; and, as the horses of Russia are very small, they distinguished ours by the name of Cognia.

Digitized by Google

the most deplorable manner. They had however this consolation, that they possessed the esteem of the Prince, who formed them at first, and who now sighed over the calamities which the fatal circumstances of the campaign would not permit him to alleviate.

The night had been undisturbed, but in the morning (November 14th) we heard the report of cannon every five minutes. The Viceroy comprehending that it was a signal of distress from General Broussier, immediately mounted his horse accompanied by his aides-de-camp Giflenga, Bataille, Tascher, and Labedoyère. The officers of artillery Delfante, Cornee, and Sanoi, likewise followed him. These officers proved, in this melancholy retreat, that their souls were nobly tempered, and that overwhelmed with accumulated difficulties, they thought only of the glory of surmounting them.

As soon as he arrived on the heights of Smolensko, he put himself at the head of the Italian guard. The cold was so intense that thirty-two grenadiers were frozen to death in the ranks. In the meantime General Broussier was forced to evacuate the village in which he had been intrenched, having been engaged with the Russians since the break of day. He put to the sword the detachments of the enemy which opposed his re-

Digitized by Google

treat, and by dint of bravery rejoined the Viceroy, who advanced to his assistance.

Wishing to favour the entry of the feeble remnant of our baggage into Smolensko, the Prince ordered the second brigade to attack a Russian battery that cannonaded the bridge over which the waggons were obliged to pass. General Heyligers immediately drew out two field-pieces and a howitzer, while fifty of our soldiers ascended the heights to turn the enemy's light artillery; but as soon as the Russians perceived this movement, they retreated at full speed. Our convoy then cleared the defile, crossed the bridge, and continued its route, under the very eyes of the cossacks, who, being then few in number, seemed to be posted rather to escort, than to plunder our baggage.

(November 14). The Emperor, who was at Smolensko when we arrived there, received every day disastrous news of his armies. That which most affected him, was the defeat of General Baraguay D'Hilliers, sent on the road of Kaluga with General Augereau, to oppose Count Orloff Denisoff, who threatened to cut off the retreat of our army. These generals having fresh troops with them occupied the villages of Yazvino, Liakhovo, and Dolghomosté. Although General Augereau was intrenched in his position, he could

Digitized by Google

not maintain it more than one hour, with only three thousand infantry, when attacked by 5000 cavalry. Count Baraguay d'Hilliers who was three leagues in the rear, fearful of being surrounded, was now compelled to fall back on Smolensko, bringing with him all his cannon and baggage. He was perfectly convinced, that with only two or three thousand men, he could not resist the attack of the Russian army, which coming from Kaluga was taking a position between Smolensko and Krasnoe*. At a loss how to repair so many disgraces, Napoleon, on that day, and for the first time, held a grand council, at which all the generals of division and marshals of the empire assisted. As soon as the council was broken up, he burned part of his equipage, and immediately departed in his carriage, accompanied by his chasseurs, and by the Polish lancers of the guard. It was reported at

* The result of this unfortunate expedition, and all the calamities which followed it, have been attributed to General Baraguay d'Hilliers, but it is easy to conceive that a few feeble battalions could not successfully oppose an entire army. All impartial persons plainly saw, that Napoleon, soured by misfortune, wished to throw the blame of his own imprudence on a general of well-known skill, and whose spirit was so noble that he died of grief at being calumniated for a measure by which he neither compromised the honour nor the lives of his brethren in arms.

Digitized by Google

the close of the council, that we were to march to-morrow with the first corps, and that the third was to remain behind to blow up the fortifications of the town, and to form our rear-guard. The same day the Viceroy was long closeted with General Guilleminot, and we awaited with anxiety the result of all these conferences.

(November 15). The order was given to continue our march, but at a very late hour, owing to the delay occasioned by the dilatory distribution of the whole contents of the magazines. The Russian women, whose sufferings only added to our misfortunes, were left at Smolensko. Dreadful situation! since these unfortunate beings well knew that the remains of the city would be sacked, the houses delivered to the flames, and the churches undermined. We soon however heard that the Hetman Platoff, entering unexpectedly into the town, had prevented our rear-guard from executing the inhuman order.

Marching from Smolensko, a spectacle the most horrible was presented to our view. We saw under the ramparts an immense quantity of artillery, once the trophies of our victories, but what we were now obliged to abandon to the enemy. From that point till we arrived at the wretched ruined hamlet of Loubna, at the distance of about three leagues, the road was entirely covered with cannon and ammunition-wag-

Digitized by Google

guns, which they had scarcely time to spike, or to blow up. Whole teams of cattle, sinking under their labours, fell together. The carcasses of the horses covered and blocked up the way. More than 30,000 of them perished in a few days *. All the defiles which the carriages could not pass, were filled with muskets, helmets, and breast-plates. Trunks broken open, portmanteaus torn to pieces, and garments of every kind, were scattered over the valley. At every distance, we met with trees at the foot of which the soldiers had attempted to light a fire, but the poor wretches had perished ere they could accomplish their object. We saw them stretched around the green branches which they had vainly endeavoured to kindle; and so numerous were the bodies, that they would have obstructed the road had not the soldiers been often employed in throwing them into the ditches and the ruts.

These horrors, far from exciting our sensibility, only hardened our hearts. Our cruelty, which could no more be exercised on the enemy, was extended to our companions. The best friends no longer recognised each other. Whoever discovered the least sickness, if he had not good horses and faithful servants, was sure never to see his country again. Every one preferred to

* 29th Bulletin.

Digitized by Google

save the *plunder of Moscow*, rather than the life of his comrade. On all sides we heard the groans of the dying, and the lamentable cries of those whom we had abandoned. But all were deaf to their supplications, or, if any one approached those who were on the point of expiring, it was to plunder, not to assist them; it was to search whether they had any remains of food, and not to afford them relief.

Being arrived at Loubna, we were able to save only two miserable barns from destruction, one for the Viceroy, and the other for his staff. We had scarcely established ourselves there, when we heard a loud cannonade in our front. As the noise appeared to come from our right, some thought that it was an engagement with the ninth corps, which, not having been able to relieve Witepsk, was obliged to retreat before a superior force; but they who were best acquainted with the country, believed that it was the Emperor and his guard, who had been attacked before his arrival at Krasnoë, by Milloradowitch and Count Orloff Denisoff*, who coming from Elnïa, had cut off the retreat of our army, during our stay at Smolensko.

We can scarcely imagine a picture more de-

* These generals commanded the advanced-guard of the army of Kutusoff.

Digitized by Google

plorable than the bivouack of the staff. Twenty-one officers, confounded with as many servants, had crept together round a little fire, under an execrable cart-house scarcely covered. Behind them were the horses ranged in a circle, that they might be some defence against the wind, which blew with great violence. The smoke was so thick that we could scarcely see the figures of those who were close to the fire, and who were employed in blowing the coals on which they cooked their food. The rest, wrapped in their pelisses or their cloaks, lay one upon another, as some protection from the cold; nor did they stir, except to abuse those who trod upon them as they passed, or to rail at the horses, which furiously plunged whenever a spark fell upon them.

(November 16th). We recommenced our march before the dawn of day, and the road was again covered with the wrecks of our baggage and artillery. The horses could no longer draw, and we were obliged to abandon our cannon at the foot of the slightest hill. The only duty which now remained to the artillery-men, was to scatter the powder of the cartridges, and to spike the pieces, lest the enemy should turn them against us. We were reduced to this extremity when, at the distance of two hours' march from Krasnoë, the General Poitevin and Guyon, who were in the van-guard, saw a Russian officer coming to-

Digitized by Google

wards them, followed by a trumpeter who announced that a herald was advancing. Surprised at an appearance so unexpected, General Guyon halted, and, permitting the officer to approach, demanded whence he came, and what was the object of his mission. "I come," said he, from "General Milloradowitch, to tell you, that yesterday we beat Napoleon and the imperial guard; "and that to-day the Viceroy is surrounded by an "army of twenty thousand men. He cannot es- "cape us, and if he will surrender, we will offer "him honourable terms." To this General Guyon replied with indignation, "Return quickly "whence you came, and announce to those who "sent you, that if you have twenty thousand men, "we have here four times twenty thousand." These words, uttered with a confident air, so confounded the herald, that he immediately returned to the camp of the enemy.

While this was going on, the Viceroy arrived, and listened to the intelligence with mingled surprise and indignation. Although his corps was so dreadfully weakened, and he probably had some knowledge of the serious affair which had taken place on the day before, between the advanced-guard of Kutusoff, and the imperial guard, yet, reflecting on the boasting manner in which this had been related, he conceived the hope, that by forcing a passage he might shortly

Digitized by Google

rejoin the Emperor. He was likewise fully determined to fall honourably in the field, rather than accept of conditions incompatible with his fame. He immediately ordered the wreck of the fourteenth division to front the enemy, carrying with them the only two pieces of cannon which remained.

That division now consisted of scarcely a thousand armed men, and had, since the break of day, marched on the left of our route, to keep in check the cossacks, who continually harassed our flanks. He then called for General Guilleminot, and conferred with him for a long time. The result of their conference was, that it was absolutely necessary to force our way through the enemy. In the meantime our troops had marched on, and the Russians gave way as we advanced. They retreated to the very foot of the hill on which they had been encamped, when suddenly unmasking their batteries, they directed them on our squares. Their cavalry soon after descending from their position, galloped over the plain to charge us. The brave 35th, though harassed with fatigue, having most of their men wounded, and being scarcely able to keep the field, received the enemy with that undaunted courage which so eminently distinguished the French soldier. It is necessary to have seen our cruel situation to render full justice to their heroic conduct.

Digitized by Google

General Ornano advanced across the fire of the enemy, with the remains of the thirteenth division, to succour the troops of the fourteenth which were so cruelly engaged, when a cannon-ball passed so near him that he fell from his horse. The soldiers thought that he was dead, and ran forward to plunder him, when they perceived that he was only stunned by the violence of the fall. The Prince then sent his aide-de-camp, Colonel Delfanti, to endeavour to reanimate the troops. That brave officer, rushing forward amidst a shower of balls and grape-shot, encouraged his soldiers by his exhortations and by his example; when, receiving two dangerous wounds, he was compelled to retire from the ranks. A surgeon having applied a slight dressing, he returned with difficulty from the field of battle. On his way he met Monsieur de Villeblanche, who, in the capacity of auditor of the council of state, had quitted the town of Smolensko, of which he was the intendant, with General Charpentier, who was the governor. Unfortunately he had obtained leave of the Viceroy to accompany him. This generous young man, perceiving Colonel Delfanti wounded, and leaning on an officer, listened to the dictates of his sensibility and offered him his arm also. As all three were slowly retiring from the field, a cannon-ball struck the colonel between the shoulders, and

Digitized by Google

carried off the head of the brave Villeblanche. Thus perished two young men, who, in different professions, had eminently displayed their talents and their courage. The first fell a victim to his bravery, the other to his humanity. The Prince, deeply affected by this unhappy catastrophe, shewed the regard which he felt for the memory of Colonel Delfanti, by an act of benevolence towards the author of his being; and he would have afforded the same consolation to the father of Villeblanche, if unexpected events had not arrested the course of his magnificence. The 200 men whom Colonel Delfanti had commanded, advanced to support the square of the 35th, but having lost their chief, some of them drew up in front, and others in the rear of the square. The enemy's cavalry profiting by this confusion, renewed the charge, and captured the two last pieces of cannon, of which we had made but few discharges through want of ammunition. General Heyligers attempted to rally the feeble wreck of our troops, when he received three sabre-wounds on his head, and at the moment that two Russian riflemen were about to run him through with their bayonets, a horseman came up who perceiving that he was a general, seized him by the collar, and dragged him away a prisoner.

Many officers of distinguished merit perished on that bloody day. We particularly regretted Major

Digitized by Google

D'Oreille, whose intrepidity was so well known, and the aide-de-camp Fromage, whose talents were only equalled by his great activity. The cannonade yet continued, and carried destruction through all our ranks. The field of battle was covered with the dead and the dying. Great numbers of the wounded abandoning their regiments took refuge in the rear, and increased the crowd of stragglers. The firing, which had proved so fatal to our first ranks, extended its ravages to the rear of our army, where the dismounted officers were stationed. The Captains Bordoni and Mastini perished there. They constituted a part of the small number of the Italian guards who yet survived.

The Viceroy, seeing the obstinacy with which the enemy disputed our passage, by a skilful movement, pretended to renew the engagement on our left, by rallying and reuniting all that remained of the fourteenth division; and, while the enemy concentrated the greater part of his forces on this point to surround and cut off these troops, the Prince took advantage of the close of day to file off to the right with the royal guard, which had not been engaged. Colonel Kliski gave a remarkable proof of presence of mind in that march. He was familiar with the Russian language, and marched in the vanguard of the column, when he was suddenly stopped by a

Digitized by Google

scout of the enemy, who cried in Russian, "Who goes there?" That intrepid officer, not at all embarrassed by a rencontre so unfortunate, advanced towards the sentinel, and said to him in his own language, "Hold your "tongue, scoundrel; don't you see that we "belong to the corps of Ouwarow, and that we "are going on a secret expedition!" At these words the soldier was silent, and suffered us to pass under the protection of the night, without giving the alarm.

The whole army thus escaped the vigilance of the enemy, with the exception of the fifteenth division, which forming the rear-guard was placed under the command of General Triaire, with orders to march as soon as the Prince had effected his manœuvre. While this division rested on its arms, it beheld with grief the destruction which spread among the stragglers who were left in the rear. These unhappy beings likewise waited for night to continue their route; but when harassed by fatigue, they found themselves warm and comfortable round a blazing fire, many of them would not proceed until the return of day. Thus they perished, the victims of their own apathy. The fifteenth division soon filed off in the utmost silence, regarding those whom they left behind as the destined prey of the cossacks.

Digitized by Google

It was necessary to pass the enemy during a night which, instead of protecting us by its obscurity, suddenly presented a beautiful unclouded moon. The snow, covering the surface of the ground, rendered our march more conspicuous; and it was not without terror that we saw ourselves flanked by clouds of cossacks, who continually approached close to us, as if to reconnoitre, and then returned to the squadrons from which they had been detached. We often thought that they were about to charge us, but General Triaire, halting his column, presented a front so imposing that they did not dare to attack us. At length, in spite of the ravines, and the mountains of snow that obstructed our passage, we reached the great road, and half an hour afterwards, effected a junction with the young guard, which was encamped near a river half a league from Krasnoë. There we found the Emperor, and there consequently our fears were dissipated.

Recounting to the soldiers of the guard the combat which we had sustained, they informed us, that they likewise had been obliged to cut their way through the enemy. Napoleon was exposed to the most imminent danger in this engagement, and was indebted for his safety to the bravery of his troops. We were told that the band of the guard, rejoining him, after having

Digitized by Google

been separated from him in the heat of the battle, immediately struck up the air, "Where can we "be happier, than in the bosom of our family." But as this might have a double meaning in the midst of frozen deserts, he understood it in the worst sense, and said to the musicians in a rough tone of voice, "'You had much better play, 'Let us awake, and save the empire.'"

The staff of the Emperor, his guard, the cavalry, and the fourth corps forming a junction in this little town, so completely filled it, that it was scarcely possible to move. The streets were thronged with soldiers lying round their fires, which they could only keep up by demolishing the houses that were built with wood, and burning the doors and window-frames of the others.

The Viceroy was well received at the quarters of the Emperor, in spite of the ill-humour which he felt in consequence of the late disgraces, to which he had been unaccustomed. He highly approved of the stratagem that had been employed to deceive the enemy. The Prince remaining all night in conference, his suite encamped in the streets, until Napoleon and the Viceroy, placing themselves at the head of the guard, marched on the position which the Russians occupied, to succour the first, third, and fifth corps*, who were in the

* The Poles had been united to the third corps after Prince

Digitized by Google

same perilous situation in which we had been placed on the preceding evening.

A new engagement commenced. The action was obstinate and bloody, and it was only by the bravery and skill of the Prince of Eckmühl that the troops under his command were saved from absolute destruction. The Duke of Elchilgen, forming the rear-guard, found the enemy so numerous that he was unable to rejoin us. The Emperor hesitated to quit Krasnoe, hoping that he might arrive, but the enemy rapidly advancing, compelled us to evacuate our position. He often halted to listen whether the report of cannon announced the approach of our rear-guard. All his cares were fruitless, and he was obliged to abandon with regret a marshal of France, who far from accepting the propositions of the enemy, threw himself on the other side of the Dnieper with the remnant of his troops, and bravely contended with the superior forces which pressed upon him, and surrounded him. The Russians believing that his escape was impossible, redoubled their efforts to make him capitulate.

All these reverses, increased rather than dimi-

Poniatowski, much injured by a fall from his horse, had been compelled to resign the command. These two corps, united under the orders of the Duke of Elchingen (Ney) scarcely numbered 3000 men under arms, but they had with them more than 4000 sick, wounded, or stragglers.

Digitized by Google

nished our fame. Kutusoff and Milloradowitch, less surprised at the immense losses which we sustained, than at our unshaken courage and perseverance, candidly acknowledged to the officers whom they made prisoners, that they owed their success to the elements alone, and warmly applauded the heroism of our generals, who, reduced to the most cruel extremities, always rejected with dignity the summonses which they dared to send to them.

Twenty-five pieces of cannon, and many thousands of prisoners, were the fruits which the Russians reaped from four successive battles, in which we had nothing to oppose against a complete army, but some miserable soldiers, harassed by continual marches, and who, during more than a month, had been without food, without ammunition, and without artillery.

To reward the bravery of the Russian imperial guard, who had distinguished themselves in these different engagements, Prince Kutusoff permitted them to carry all the trophies of victory from the field of battle to their camp. Among these, was the baton of the Marshal Prince of Eckmuhl*. But that baton, used by our marshals on days of ceremony alone, added no glory to the enemy, for

* See the official report of our retreat, published by the Russians at Wilna, December 22d, 1812.

Digitized by Google

they found it in a baggage-waggon that had been abandoned.

The Russians have divided our retreat into three principal epochs, which, besides the constant increase of our misfortunes, have each a peculiar character. The first ended at the battle of Krasnoë, the second at the passage of the Beresina, and the third at the Niemen.

At the conclusion of the first period, to which we are now arrived, they had already taken forty thousand men, twenty-seven generals, five hundred pieces of cannon, thirty-one standards, and beside our own immense baggage, all the plunder of Moscow, that we had not destroyed. If to all these disasters, we yet add forty thousand more dead of fatigue, or famine, or killed in the different battles, we shall find that our army was reduced to thirty thousand, including the imperial guard, of whom not more than eight thousand combatants survived. The twenty-five pieces of artillery which the guards had preserved could not be reckoned, since it was uncertain whether they would not be obliged to abandon them on the morrow. Our cavalry was almost extinct. This is the exact statement of the losses which we had sustained at the end of one month's march. From this we formed mournful presages of what we were yet to endure, since we were scarcely half-way to the Niemen, and had three rivers to cross, and two mountains to climb.

Digitized by Google

BOOK IX.

THE BERESINA.

The dreadful disasters which we had endured in our retreat from Moscow to Krasnoë, led us to conclude that our misfortunes must have reached their utmost height, and that happier events would succeed. In fact, the noble position of Orcha being guarded by General Jomini, we were assured that we should pass the Dnieper without opposition, and effect a junction with the corps of General Dombrowski, and the Dukes of Reggio and Belluno; moreover, we were approaching the line of our magazines, and we should soon enter on an inhabited and friendly country. In fine, Prince Kutusoff, wishing to concert his plan of attack with the army of Moldavia which was ready to join him, ceased to harass us, and reserved for the Beresina the great results which the battle of Krasnoë had promised him.

All these advantages, on which it was said that

Digitized by Google

we might build the surest hopes, imposed on the soldiers only for a short time. They who were best acquainted with the state of affairs soon dissipated our illusions, by circulating the report that Admiral Tschikakoff, coming from the Danube, had repulsed the troops that opposed his passage near Varsovia; that the Austrians had suffered him to take Minsk; and that by seizing the bridge of Borisov, on the Beresina, the admiral intended to form a junction with Generals Wittgenstein and Stengel. These generals being no longer held in check by the twelfth and sixteenth corps since the battle of Polotsk, had gone, the one on Vileika to attack the Bavarians, and the other towards Tschachniki to place itself in communication with the army of Moldavia. On this junction depended the fate of the French army, and it was to prevent the most dreadful, and the most memorable of all defeats, that Napoleon advanced by forced marches on the Beresina.

(November 17th). As soon as the Prince of Eckmuhl had joined us, and the Duke of Elchingen had thrown himself on the other side of the Dnieper, we left Krasnoë, about eleven o'clock in the morning, and marched towards Liadouï. During the short repose that we had taken at Krasnoë, the cossacks had passed by that city, and now, ranged in columns, followed us along the road. We made a false attack to keep them in

Digitized by Google

check, and to give our baggage, and the convoys of the wounded, time to pursue their route, but the Russians perceiving that the miserable wreck of our baggage was stopped, and in great disorder from the difficulty which the horses found in clearing the valley which separated the town from a little hill, refused the combat, and rushing upon a part of the train, plundered it without resistance. We there lost the baggage-waggon of the staff, which contained the registers of correspondence, and all the plans, charts, and memoirs, relative to the campaign. As the enemy continually advanced, and briskly cannonaded us, the Emperor placed himself in the middle of a square formed by his guards; the cavalry was on our flanks, while the wreck of the first corps, with the voltigeurs and fusileers, commanded by the Duke of Treviso, formed the rear-guard. Napoleon, unwilling to abandon the Duke of Elchingen, frequently halted, and at every halt was compelled to sustain the most murderous attacks. In all these affairs the soldiers of the young guard displayed an admirable courage, and cheerfully enduring every species of suffering, emulated the glory of the old guard.

Night began to overtake us, as we entered Liadouï. Above a little river, which we were to cross previous to our arrival at Liadouï, was a lofty hill, the side of which was so slippery as to

Digitized by Google

render the descent not a little dangerous. The town offered a new aspect to us, for there we first saw inhabitants. Although they were Jews, we forgot the filthiness of that venal people, and by force of entreaty, or rather by force of money, we made them find considerable resources in a town that at first appeared to be ruined. That avarice, which was the object of our supreme contempt in the Jews, was here advantageous to us, because it made them brave every danger to procure us what we demanded.

As Liadouï formed part of Lithuania, we thought that it would have been respected, because it belonged to ancient Poland. We departed before daybreak on the following morning (November 19), when, to our great astonishment, we were as usual lighted by the fire of the houses. That conflagration produced one of the most distressing scenes of our whole retreat, and my pen would refuse to recount it, if the recital of our misfortunes had not for its object, and its moral, to render odious that fatal ambition which forced the most civilized people to become barbarians in war.

Amongst the buildings which were burning, were three vast barns filled with soldiers, most of whom were wounded. They could not escape from the two which were behind, without passing through the one that was in front; and that was

Digitized by Google

enveloped in flames. The most active saved themselves by leaping out of the windows; but the sick and the wounded, being unable to move, saw, with horrible consternation, the flames rapidly advancing to devour them. Moved by the shrieks with which these unhappy beings rent the air, some, whose hearts were less hardened than others, attempted to save them. Vain effort! Before we could reach them, they were more than half buried under the burning rafters.—Eagerly did they cry to their comrades through the whirlwinds of fire, to shorten their sufferings by immediately depriving them of life. It became the painful duty of humanity to comply with their entreaties. "Fire upon us, fire upon us, at the "head, at the head; do not hesitate," were the cries which proceeded from every part of the building, nor did they cease, till every wretched victim was consumed.

The cavalry was totally dismounted, and Napoleon wanting an escort, all the officers who had been able to preserve a horse, were formed into four companies of 150 men each. Generals Defrance, Saint-Germain, Sebastiani, &c. acted as captains, and the colonels constituted the sub-officers. This squadron, to which the name of *sacred* was given, was commanded by General Grouchy, under the orders of the King of Naples. Their duty was never to lose sight of the Empe-

Digitized by Google

ror. But these horses, which had hitherto resisted the rigour of the climate, having been better taken care of than those of the soldiers, perished as soon as they were made to bear their share of fatigue and privations; and at the end of a few days the sacred squadron was no more.

The enemy continued to follow us at the distance of two or three musket-shots, while the poor remains of the army, having no longer the means of defence, continued their march in the extremest disorder. They were incessantly harassed by the cossacks, who at every defile, fell upon the rear of our column, plundered our baggage, and compelled us to abandon our artillery, which the horses could no longer draw. Napoleon had hitherto travelled in a chariot almost hermetically closed, and filled with furs. He wore a pelisse and a bonnet of sable furs, which prevented him from feeling the severest cold; but after we quitted Krasnoë, he often proceeded on foot, followed by his staff, and saw, without emotion, the miserable wrecks of an army once so powerful, file before him. Yet his presence never excited a single murmur; on the contrary, it reanimated the most timid, who forgot all their sufferings and all their fears at sight of the Emperor.

We quickly entered into Doubrowna. That town was in a better state of preservation than

Digitized by Google

any through which we had passed in our journey from Moscow. It had a Polonese sub-prefect, and a commandant of the town. The inhabitants were principally Jews, who procured us a little flour, brandy, and metheglin. They also exchanged the paper-money of the soldiers for cash. In fine, astonished at the confidence of these Israelites, and the honesty of our soldiers, who paid for every thing which they took, we thought plenty was about to revisit us, and that our misfortunes were near their close. Yet we were struggling under accumulated evils. "Bread! "bread!" was the incessant cry of the feeble remains of our once powerful army. The followers of the camp of every kind suffered greatly, particularly the commissaries and storekeepers, who had been little accustomed to privations.—But none were more to be pitied than the physicians, and especially the surgeons, who, without hope of advancement, exposed themselves like the common soldiers, by dressing the wounded on the field of battle. While we were at Doubrowna, I saw a young surgeon near a house which the soldiers surrounded in crowds, because it was reported that provisions were to be procured there. He was plunged in the profoundest grief, and, with an eager and an anxious countenance, was violently endeavouring to force

Digitized by Google

his way into the place. But when he was again and again driven back by the crowd, he exhibited the wildest despair. I ventured to inquire the cause, " Ah, captain!" said he, " I am a " lost man. For two days I have had no food, " and ascertaining that they sold bread in this " house, I gave the sentinel six francs to suffer " me to enter. But while the bread was yet in " the oven, the Jew would not promise to supply " me, unless I gave him a louis in advance. I " consented, but when I came back the sentinel " was changed, and I was cruelly repulsed from " the door. Ah, Sir!" continued he, " I am in- " deed unfortunate; I have lost all the money " that I had in the world, and am unable to pro- " cure a morsel of bread, though I have not tasted " any for more than a month."

On the day that we arrived at Doubrowna, Napoleon had marched a great part of the way on foot. During that march the enemy did not appear, he could therefore easily convince himself to what a miserable state his army was reduced, and how much he had been deceived by the false reports which some generals had made, who knowing how dangerous it was to confess the truth, did not dare to acquaint him with the real state of things, lest they should incur his displeasure. As he had often experienced the wonderful

Digitized by Google

effects of his discourse on the soldiers, he once more mingled among them, and addressing himself angrily to the officers, and familiarly and jestingly to the soldiers, he endeavoured to inspire the one with fear, and the others with courage. But the time of enthusiasm was passed, when one word from him would have produced miracles. His tyranny had oppressed and debased us, and, stifling within us every generous feeling, had deprived him of the only means of reanimating our drooping spirits. Napoleon was most affected at seeing his old guard equally dispirited and despairing. Preserving an unruffled countenance, though he was exceedingly agitated, he assembled a party of these veterans before he quitted Doubrowna, and placing himself in their centre, recommended the officers to maintain strict discipline, reminding them that they had always been the pride of his army, and that to their bravery he had often been indebted for the most splendid victories. But sentiments like these were out of season, and the man, who destitute of virtue aspired to the character of a hero, now too plainly found, that the grandest projects were followed by no glory, when they had not some laudable object, and when their execution was beyond the scope of human ability.

(November 19th). Half an hour after we

Digitized by Google

quitted Doubrowna, we passed a very wide and deep ravine through which flowed a considerable river. The opposite bank completely commanded that at which we had arrived. On seeing this important position, we thanked Heaven that the Russians had not seized upon it to oppose our passage, and this gave us reason to hope that the village of Orcha was not occupied by them. In fact, some troops lately arrived from France maintained themselves there, and we effected a junction with them, at two o'clock in the afternoon, without being harassed by the cossacks. This was a new instance of good fortune, for in the disorder in which we then were, it would have been impossible for us to have forced either of these strong positions.

These troops had constructed two bridges over the Dnieper, and as every one rushed on to pass first, the crowd was immense, yet fortunately no accident occured. Napoleon arrived at Orcha soon after us, and in an instant the houses, which were built of wood, were occupied by the different staffs and by a crowd of soldiers who forcibly took possession of them. The Jews immediately procured us trifling refreshments, but the number of purchasers was so great that all was soon consumed.

The more I examined the position of Orcha,

Digitized by Google

the greater was my astonishment that the Russians had not taken possession of it. The town is built on the right bank of the Dnieper, which rises considerably higher than the left. Many projections appear from the bank in the form of natural bastions, and perfectly command the passage. The river flows immediately beneath, and is about one thousand two hundred feet wide, and of immense depth. The most formidable army could not pass it without being exposed to entire ruin. While we halted upon these heights, we heard many discharges of musketry, and shortly afterwards, we saw those who had been left on the other side retiring with the greatest precipitation, and crying as they approached us, "The cossacks, the cossacks!" In fact, they soon appeared, but in numbers so small, that we should have been indignant, if those who fled before them had not been wretched stragglers, without arms, and mostly wounded.

(November 20th). On the following day we were unmolested, except that we occasionally heard some discharges of musketry directed against the cossacks; but accustomed to see them advance upon us, and immediately betake themselves to flight when faced by the regular troops, their presence gave us no uneasiness. We were thus permitted to taste undisturbed the sweets of one day's repose, and some provisions were

Digitized by Google

distributed amongst us, which General Jomini, governor of Orcha, had preserved for the passage of the army. They proved the more acceptable to us, as we had received no rations of bread since our retreat from Smolensko, the magazines of Krasnoë having been pillaged by the cossacks before we arrived *.

The Poles were so little aware of the deplorable state to which the power of Napoleon was reduced, that a deputation of the province of Mohilow came to Orcha, the day on which we arrived there, to compliment him on his return. But his present situation formed so striking a contrast with the haughtiness which he had assumed during his march to Moscow, that he could not resolve to admit the deputies. Willing to spare himself an audience so painful, he dismissed them politely, renewing the assurance that they might always depend on his protection.

The day had been tranquil; but in the night our joy was extreme at hearing that the Duke of Elchingen (Ney) had arrived. Since the disastrous day of Krasnoë, he had been obliged to abandon the road that we pursued, and seek a

* I ought to observe, that only the soldiers who were present at the roll-call, received any distribution, and they did not form a fifth part of the army; and there were only three distributions in the space of two months, namely, at Smolensko, at Orcha, and at Kowno.

Digitized by Google

safer retreat on the other side of the Dnieper, and had been engaged with the enemy during three whole days. In that retreat he had recourse to every manœuvre that the most extraordinary courage and talents could effect. Passing over an unknown country, he marched with his troops drawn up in the form of a square, and constantly repelled with success the attacks of six thousand cossacks who every moment charged furiously upon him, to compel him to surrender. This heroic resistance completed his brilliant reputation, and proved that he was no less skilful in warding off the adverse blows of fortune, than in profiting by her favours. His valour was seconded by the generous movement of the Prince Viceroy, who proceeded by forced marches to succour him, and whose assistance effected his deliverance*.

(November 21st). We marched from Orcha at the moment that they began to set it on fire. As we climbed the mountain to recover the grand

* This retreat was one of the most beautiful operations of the campaign. When he passed the Dnieper, it is said that all his troops were in despair, and every one considered himself lost. His staff eagerly sought to receive his orders. To their great surprise he was found couched beneath a ridge of snow, and attentively examining a chart. The calmness of their chief, in circumstances of so much danger, immediately dissipated their fears, and inspired them with confidence and hope.

Digitized by Google

road, we heard a considerable firing of musketry. It proceeded from the soldiers of the first corps, who had been left in the town to form the rear-guard, and who were already engaged with the cossacks.

During our stay at Orcha, Napoleon, foreseeing that he should soon be placed in a most critical situation, made every effort to rally his troops. He caused it to be proclaimed by sound of trumpet, and by three colonels, that every soldier who did not immediately rejoin his regiment should be punished with death; and that every officer or general who abandoned his post should be dismissed. But when we regained the great road, we perceived what little effect this measure had produced. All was in the most frightful confusion, and in contempt of this severe proclamation, the soldiers, naked and without arms, continued to march in the same disorder.

We encamped at a sorry village on our right, where two or three habitations remained, at the distance of an hour's march from Kokanovo. The village of Kokanovo, which we passed on the following day, was entirely ruined; the post-house, which had been inhabited by the staff, alone remained. We were continuing our march along a road which the thaw had rendered horribly dirty, when we received orders not to push forward to Tolotschin, where Napoleon had fixed his quar-

Digitized by Google

ters, but to halt at a great *chateau* half a league distant. To deceive the enemy, Napoleon seldom slept at the place which he had announced in the morning. He was often obliged to encamp upon the road, and to sleep in the middle of the square formed by his guards. Hunger and cold so weakened the soldiers in these bivouacks, that his escort every day diminished in a frightful manner.

The road of Orcha, as far as Tolotschin, is undoubtedly one of the best in Europe. It forms a perfectly straight line, and is bordered on each side by a double row of birch-trees, the branches of which, laden with snow and ice, hung down to the ground like the weeping willow. But these majestic avenues excited in us no admiration. They witnessed only our tears and our despair. On every side we heard only groans and lamentations. Some, feeling that they could proceed no further, laid themselves on the ground, and with tears in their eyes, gave us their papers and their money to be conveyed to their families. "Ah! if more fortunate than we," they exclaimed, "you are permitted to revisit our dear "country, give our parents this last pledge of "our love. Tell them that the hope of seeing "them again alone sustained us till this day; and "that at length, compelled to renounce this "pleasing expectation, we died thinking of them,

Digitized by Google

" and blessing them. Adieu, God bless you!
" When, on your return to our beloved France,
" you rejoice in your good fortune, sometimes
" think of our unhappy fate." A little further on we met others, who, holding in their arms their famished children or their wives, implored one morsel of bread to preserve their lives.

In the meantime, Napoleon was informed that the army of Wolhynia, joined to that of Moldavia, had marched on Minsk (Nov. 16th), and that it had seized on the bridge of Borisov, to cut us off from the passage of the Beresina. It is reported that when he heard this fatal news, he calmly said, " It is then decided, that we must " play the fool." Very extraordinary words, in a position so critical*. He also knew, that the army of Wittgenstein, reinforced by the division of Stengel, sharply pressed the twelfth and sixteenth corps, that it might be enabled to march on the Borisov, and form a junction with Admiral Tschikakoff and Prince Kutusoff. To oppose the execution of a plan which would complete our ruin, Napoleon ordered General Dombrowski to raise the siege of Bobruisk, and advance to Minsk,

* The greater part of the corrections and additons made in the 9th book, are taken from a pamphlet, entitled, " An im-
" partial Relation of the Passage of the Beresina," by an anonymous author. He has thrown great light on the operations of the three grand Russian armies.

Digitized by Google

which we had so much interest in preserving. But the faulty dispositions of the governor of that city, caused it to surrender before any succour could arrive. General Dombrowski then marched upon Borisov, where he found the remains of the garrison of Minsk. He established himself at the head of the bridge, but (Nov. 21st) after a bloody engagement with the division of Langeron and Lambert, he was compelled to abandon his position and retire on Nemonitsa. The Duke of Reggio, who was at Tschéréïa proceeded immediately to the succour of General Dombrowski, and endeavoured to secure for the army the passage of the Beresina. On the following day (Nov. 24th) he met the division of the Russian General Lambert, behind Nemonitsa, commanded by General Pahlen*. He attacked and beat it. At the same time General Berkheim made a brilliant charge with the fourth regiment of chasseurs, and forced the enemy to retreat to the other bank of the river, after having lost two thousand men, six cannon, and a quantity of baggage.

The army of Moldavia having destroyed in its flight the great bridge of Borisov, defended all the

* General Lambert had given up the command; having been wounded in the combat in which his division carried the head of the bridge of Borogow.

Digitized by Google

right bank of the Beresina, and occupied, with four divisions, commanded by Generals Langeron, Lambert, Wainow, and Tschaplitz, the principal points where we could possibly attempt to pass it. During the 25th, Napoleon manœuvred to deceive the vigilance of the enemy, and, by stratagem, obtained possession of the village of Weselowo, placed on an eminence that commanded the river which we wished to pass. There, in the presence of the Russians, and notwithstanding their utmost opposition, he constructed two bridges, of which the Duke of Reggio (Oudinot) profited, to cross the Beresina with the sixth division; and attacking the troops which opposed his passage commanded by General Tschaplitz, he put them to flight, and pursued them, without intermission, to the head of the bridge of Borisov. Generals Legrand and Dombrowski, officers of distinguished merit, were wounded in this affair. Napoleon was thus assured that the admiral alone was on the right bank, and that the army of Wittgenstein had not yet effected a junction with him.

The Duke of Belluno (Victor) who since the affair of Smoliani, in which he took 300 prisoners, had kept the corps of Wittgenstein in check, having received orders to follow the movements of the Duke of Reggio, was pursued in his retreat by the Russian army of the Dwina. In this retrograde march he directed his course through

Digitized by Google

Tschéréïa and Kholopenitschi, and arriving at Ratoulitschi, rejoined the wreck of the army returning from Moscow. Wittgenstein instead of continuing to pursue him, proceeded from Kholopenitschi to Barau, while Prince Kutusoff remained some days at Lanniki, and did not arrive at Kopys on the Dneiper until the 23rd. General Milloradowitch who commanded the vanguard had not yet passed Kokanovo, about five days march from us. During all these operations, which took place between the 23d and 27th of November, we marched almost without interruption, traversing many villages, among which we could only learn the names of Bobr, Natscha, and Nemonitsa, where fatigue compelled us to halt. The days were so short, that although we made but little progress, we were obliged to march during part of the night. It was from this cause that so many unhappy wretches wandered from their regiments, and were lost. Arriving very late at the encampments, where all the corps were confounded together, they could not distinguish or learn the situation of the regiment to which they belonged. After having marched the whole day, they were often compelled to wander about all the night to find their officers, and rarely were they sufficiently fortunate to accomplish their object; they then laid themselves down to sleep, ignorant of the hour of march, and on

Digitized by Google

awaking, found themselves in the power of the enemy.

As we passed the Borisov, we saw the division of Parthonneaux forming the rear-guard of the ninth corps. It had left Colonel Landevoisin with one battalion, on the banks of the Skha, to burn the bridge and the mills which were established on that river. This division made a grand manœuvre with its artillery, to induce the Russians to believe, that they intended to force the passage of the Beresina; but we suddenly quitted the great road that led to the bridge occupied by the Russians, and turned to the right to proceed to Studzianca, where we found Napoleon. The other troops of the ninth corps, commanded by the Duke of Belluno, arrived likewise by the same road.

The twelfth and ninth corps, and the Poles, commanded by General Dombrowski, not having been at Moscow, had so much baggage that from Borisov to Studzianca the road was covered with carriages and waggons. The reinforcements which these troops brought us were very acceptable, yet we almost doubted whether the junction of so many men, in the centre of a vast desert, might not increase our misfortunes. Always marching in the midst of a confused mass of stragglers, with the divisions of the corps of the Duke of Belluno, we were two hours afterwards

Digitized by Google

arrested in our progress by a crowd so great, that unable to penetrate, we were compelled to march round it. In the midst of this multitude were some paltry barns on the summit of a little hill. Seeing some chasseurs of the imperial guard encamped around it, we judged that Napoleon was there, and that we were approaching the borders of the Beresina. In fact, it was the very spot where Charles XII. crossed that river on his march to Moscow *.

What a frightful picture did this multitude of men present, overwhelmed with misfortunes of every kind, and hemmed in by a morass; that very multitude which, two months before, had exultingly spread itself over half the surface of a vast empire! Our soldiers, pale, emaciated, dying with hunger and cold, having nothing to defend them from the inclemency of the season but tattered pelisses, and sheep-skins half burnt, and uttering the most mournful lamentations, crowded the banks of this unfortunate river. Germans, Polanders, Italians, Spaniards, Croats, Portuguese, and French, were all mingled together, disputing and quarrelling with each other, in their different languages:—finally, the officers and even the generals, wrapped in pelisses covered

* June 25th, 1709.

Digitized by Google

with dirt and filth, mingling with the soldiers, and abusing those who pressed upon them, or braved their authority, formed a scene of strange confusion: of which no painter could trace the faintest resemblance.

They, whom fatigue, or ignorance of the impending danger rendered less eager to cross the river, were endeavouring to kindle a fire, and repose their wearied limbs. We had too frequently occasion to observe in these encampments to what a degree of brutality excess of misery would debase human nature. In one place we saw several of the soldiers fighting for a morsel of bread. If a stranger, pierced with the cold, endeavoured to approach a fire, those to whom it belonged inhumanly drove him away; or if tormented with raging thirst, any one asked for a single drop of water from another who carried a full supply, the refusal was accompanied by the vilest abuse. We often heard those who had once been friends, and whose education had been liberal, bitterly disputing with each other for a little straw, or a piece of horse-flesh, which they were attempting to divide. This campaign was therefore the more terrible, as it brutalized the character, and stained us with vices to which we had before been strangers. Even those who once were honest, humane, and generous, became selfish, avaricious, dishonest, and cruel.

Digitized by Google

The preparations which had been made at Borisov, under pretence of reconstructing the great bridge, had considerably diminished the number of the enemy's troops opposite Weselowv. In addition to this, Kutusoff having received false information of the point at which we should pass the Beresina, had announced to Tochikagow that we should attempt it below Borisov*. Napoleon (Nov. 27) profiting by these circumstances, and especially by the arrival of the Duke of Belluno at Weselowo, placed himself at the head of his guard, about two o'clock in the afternoon, to penetrate through the immense crowd which pressed towards the river. The army likewise passed, but very slowly, on account of the continual repairs which the bridge required.

The Viceroy, who had passed the whole day with the Emperor, announced to his staff, that what remained of the fourth corps should pass the bridge at eight o'clock at night. Although not a moment should have been lost in escaping from a place so dangerous, many could not prevail on themselves to leave the fire round which they were sitting. "It is much better," said they,

* See "Impartial Relation of the Passage of the Beresina." It has been said, that Kutusoff communicated this false intelligence to revenge himself on Tschikagow, who, by his intrigues had superseded him in the command of the army of the Danube.

Digitized by Google

" to pass the night on this side of the river than " on the other, where there is nothing but " marshes; besides, the bridge is as much en- " cumbered as ever, and by waiting till to-mor- " row, the crowd will have lessened, and the " passage will be easy." This unfortunate ad- " vice prevailed on too many, and at an hour appointed, only the household of the Prince, and a few of the officers of the staff crossed the river.

It was indeed necessary to know all the danger that would have attended our stay on the left side of the river, to induce us to pass to the other. The Viceroy and his suite, arriving on the right bank, encamped on a marshy piece of ground, and endeavoured to find out the places which were most frozen, to pass the night on them, and escape the bogs. The darkness was horrible, and the wind tremendous, blowing a thick shower of ice and snow full in our faces. Many of the officers, pierced with the cold, did not cease running, and walking, and striking their feet, during the whole night, to preserve themselves from being completely frozen. To complete our misfortunes, wood was so scarce that we could with difficulty supply one little fire to the Viceroy; and to obtain some fire-brands, we were obliged to appeal to the Bavarian soldiers, the daughter of whose king had been united in marriage to Prince Eugene.

Digitized by Google

(November 28). Napoleon being gone towards Zembin, left behind him this immense crowd, which, standing on the other side of the Beresina, presented a lively, but frightful picture of the unhappy ghosts who are said to wander on the banks of the Styx, and press tumultuously towards the fatal bark. The snow fell with violence; the hills and forests presented nothing but some white indistinct masses, scarcely visible through the fog. We could only see distinctly the fatal river, which, half frozen, forced its way through the ice that impeded its progress.

Although there were two bridges, one for the carriages, and the other for the foot-soldiers, yet the crowd was so great, and the approaches so dangerous, that the way was completely obstructed near the Beresina, and it was absolutely impossible to move. About eight o'clock in the morning, the bridge for the carriages and the cavalry broke down; the baggage and artillery then advanced towards the other bridge, and attempted to force a passage. Now began a frightful contention between the foot-soldiers and the horsemen. Many perished by the hands of their comrades, a great number were suffocated at the head of the bridge; and the dead bodies of men and horses, so choked every avenue, that it was necessary to climb over mountains of carcasses to arrive at the river. Some, who were buried in

Digitized by Google

these horrible heaps, still breathed, and struggling with the agonies of death, caught hold of those who mounted over them; but these inhumanly kicked them with violence, to disengage themselves, and remorselessly trod them under foot. During this contention, the multitude which followed, like a furious wave, swept away, while it increased the number of victims.

The Duke of Belluno (Victor) remaining on the left bank, took a position on the heights of Weselowo, with the two divisions of Girard and Daendels, to cover the passage, and amidst the frightful confusion which prevailed, to defend it against the corps of Wittgenstein, whose advanced troops had appeared in the evening. In the meantime, General Parthonneaux, after having repulsed the attacks of Platow and Tschikagow, left Borisov at three o'clock in the afternoon with the third brigade to oppose the Russians who advanced in columns. Being informed that he should have to contend with superior forces, he recalled the first and second brigades which had remained at Borisov, commanded by Generals Blamont, and Lecamus. Having arrived at Staroi-Borisov, instead of taking the road to Weselowo it pursued that which led to Studentzy*. This mistake car-

* In the 29th bulletin Weselowo is called Studentzy, or Studzienka. The proximity of these villages caused them to be con-

Digitized by Google

ried the division into the very centre of Wittgenstein's army. Though this corps consisted of only 3090 men, it endeavoured to cut its way through, and maintained the combat for more than four hours during the night. Generals Blamont and Delaitre were now wounded. In the midst of the snow, and with a dreadful tempest beating upon them, our troops formed themselves into a square, and remained motionless during the rest of the night, with nothing to eat, and unwilling to make a fire, lest it should discover their position.

In this miserable situation they remained till the morrow, when perceiving that they were surrounded by the whole of Wittgenstein's army, consisting of about 45,000 men, and that resistance would now be useless, they surrendered at discretion. They were reduced to 1200 men, and two squadrons; so much had the horrors of famine, the severity of the cold, and the fire of the enemy, thinned their ranks. Yet in their misfortunes, they proved themselves to be French soldiers, and knew how to find occasion to increase their glory, even in their very defeat.

---

founded with each other, or rather the name of Studzianka was preferred because it was considerably larger than Weselowo, which was a mere hamlet, formed by some miserable barns.

Digitized by Google

Borisov being evacuated, the three Russian armies effected their junction, and the same day (November 28th), about eight o'clock in the morning, the Duke of Belluno (Victor) was attacked on the left bank by Wittgenstein, at the same time that the Duke of Reggio (Oudinot) was engaged with Tschikagow on the right, who discovering that he had been wrongly informed, reunited all his forces, and rushed upon us, at a little distance from the bridges of Weselowo. Every soldier, who had before been wandering in confusion, fell into the ranks. The battle was obstinately fought, and the Duke of Reggio could only obtain the victory at the price of his own blood. He was wounded at the beginning of the action, and compelled to quit the field. The command then devolved on the Duke of Elchingen (Ney), who yielded up his corps to the Duke of Treviso.

The Duke of Elchingen, having rallied the troops, the battle recommenced with new fury. The division of cuirassiers, commanded by General Doumerc*, made a very brilliant charge,

*That division which before belonged to the corps of General Grouchy, was afterwards joined to that of the Duke of Reggio, and remained on the Dwina. Had it proceeded to Moscow, it would not have had a single cuirassier mounted after the passage of the Beresina.

Digitized by Google

and at the same moment the legion of the Vistula was engaged in the woods, endeavouring to force the enemy's centre. These brave cuirassiers (the 4th, 7th, and 14th, regiments), although enfeebled by fatigue and privations of every kind, performed prodigies of valour. They pierced the enemy's squares, took several pieces of cannon, and three or four thousand prisoners, which our weakness would not permit us to retain: for in our cruel situation we fought not for victory, but only for life, and the honour of our arms.

In the meantime the enemy, notwithstanding the valour of our soldiers, and the exertions of their commanders, briskly pressed the ninth corps which formed the rear-guard. We already heard the roar of the cannon, and the sound dismayed every heart. Insensibly it approached, and we soon saw the fire of the enemy's artillery on the summit of the neighbouring hills, and we no longer doubted that the engagement would soon extend to that spot which was covered with thousands of unarmed men, sick and wounded, and with all our women and children.

The position which the Duke of Belluno (Victor) occupied, to oppose the progress of Wittgenstein, was very disadvantageous. Although his right was defended by the river, he could not extend his left to a wood which should have covered

Digitized by Google

it. He placed a brigade of cavalry commanded by Count Fournier to prevent himself from being turned on the side of the wood. That intrepid general made two brilliant charges, which repulsed the corps of Wittgenstein, while a battery of the guard protected the right wing. The heroic valour of these troops, and the bravery of Generals Girard, Damas, and Fournier, who though wounded would not quit the field of battle, long rendered the victory undecided; but at length courage was forced to yield to numbers, and the 9th corps, overwhelmed by accumulated forces, was compelled to abandon its position.

In the heat of the engagement, many balls flew over the miserable crowd which was yet pressing across the bridge of the Beresina. Some shells burst in the midst of them. Terror and despair then took possession of every heart. The women and children, who had escaped so many disasters, seemed to have been preserved, only to suffer here a death still more deplorable. We saw them rushing from the baggage-waggons, and falling in agonies and tears at the feet of the first soldier they met, imploring his assistance to enable them to reach the other side. The sick and the wounded, sitting on the trunks of trees, or supported by their crutches, anxiously looked around for some friend to help them. But their cries

Digitized by Google

were lost in the air. No one had leisure to attend to his dearest friend. His own preservation absorbed every thought.

Monsieur de Labarriere, the muster-master of the fourth corps, was a man of respectable character and engaging manners. His advanced age, and more especially his feeble constitution, had long rendered him unable to march, and he was now lying with many others on an open sledge. He accidentally perceived an officer of his acquaintance, and although he was scarcely able to stand, he ran to him, threw himself in his arms, and implored his protection. The officer was severely wounded, but, too generous to refuse his feeble help, he promised that he would not leave him. These two friends, closely embracing each other, slowly proceeded towards the bridge, animated by the consoling thought, that at least they would be permitted to die together. They entered the crowd; but, feeble and helpless, they were unable to sustain the intolerable pressure, and were seen no more.

A woman was likewise marching with the equipage of Napoleon, whom her husband had left a little way behind, while he went forward to endeavour to find a place where they might safely pass. During that time a shell burst near the unfortunate female. The crowd that was around

Digitized by Google

her immediately took to flight. She alone remained. But the enemy soon advancing, caused the troops to retreat suddenly towards the bridge, and in their confused march, they hurried the poor woman with them, who strove in vain to return to the place where her husband had left her. Buffeted by the tumultuous waves, she saw herself driven from the spot, without the possibility of return. We heard her from afar, loudly calling to her husband, but her piercing voice was unattended to, amidst the noise of arms, and and the cries of the combatants. At length, pale and speechless, she beat her breast in agony, and fell lifeless at the feet of the soldiers, who, attentive to their own escape, neither saw nor heard her.

At length the Russians, continually reinforced by fresh troops, advanced in a mass, and drove before them the Polonese corps of General Girard, which till then had held them in check. At the sight of the enemy, those who had not already passed mingled with the Polanders, and rushed precipitately towards the bridge. The artillery, the baggage-waggons, the cavalry, and the foot-soldiers, all pressed on, contending which should pass the first. The strongest threw into the river those who were weaker, and unfortunately hindered their passage, or unfeelingly trampled under

Digitized by Google

foot all the sick whom they found in their way. Many hundreds were crushed to death by the wheels of the cannon. Others, hoping to save themselves by swimming, were frozen in the middle of the river, or perished by placing themselves on pieces of ice, which sunk to the bottom. Thousands and thousands of victims, driven to despair, threw themselves headlong into the Beresina, and were lost in the waves. Another was seen hemmed in by the ice in the middle of the river. Being able neither to proceed nor to retreat, she held her infant above the water, into which she was gradually sinking and uttered the most piercing cries for assistance *.

The division of Girard forcibly made its way through all the obstacles that retarded its march; and, climbing over the mountain of dead bodies which obstructed the way, gained the other side. Thither the Russians would soon have followed them, if they had not hastened to burn the bridge.

Then the unhappy beings who remained on the other side of the Beresina abandoned themselves to absolute despair. Some of them attempted to pass the bridge, enveloped as it was in flames; but, arrested in the midst of their pro-

* See "Moscow before and after the burning" by G. L. D. L. an eye-witness, p. 150.

Digitized by Google

gress, they were compelled to throw themselves into the river, to escape a death yet more horrible. At length the Russians were masters of the field of battle, our troops retired, the uproar ceased, and a mourful silence succeeded.

As we marched towards Zembin, we reascended the right bank of the Beresina, whence we could distinctly see all that passed on the other side. The cold was excessive: and the wind blew in loud and hollow gusts. The obscurity of the night was dissipated only by the numerous fires of the enemy, who occupied the heights. At the foot of these hills were our unfortunate companions. Their destruction was now inevitable, and amidst all their former disasters, never were they exposed to, nor can imagination conceive, horrors equal to those which encompassed them during that frightful night. The elements let loose seemed to conspire to afflict universal nature, and to chastise the ambition and the crimes of man. The conquerors and the conquered were alike overwhelmed with sufferings. Round the encampment of the Russians, however, we saw enormous masses of burning wood, but on the spot which held our devoted companions, there was neither light nor shelter. Lamentable cries and groans alone marked the place which contained these miserable victims.

Digitized by Google

More than twenty thousand sick and wounded fell into the power of the enemy. Two hundred pieces of cannon were abandoned. All the baggage of the two corps which had joined us was equally the prey of the conquerors; yet when we contemplated the deplorable fate of the wretched beings who were left on the other side of the Beresina, the consciousness of our safety rendered us insensible to the loss of all our riches. They were for ever deprived of the hope of revisiting the land that gave them birth; and were doomed to pass the sad remnant of their days amidst the snows of Siberia, where they would water with their tears the black bread which would be the only wages of the most humiliating servitude.

(November 29th). Setting out on the morrow for Zembin, and endeavouring to rejoin what remained of the fourth corps, we again commiserated the fate of the numerous friends who were no longer with us. We eagerly embraced those who had returned, whom we had feared we should never again have beheld, and congratulated each other on surviving a day more terrible than the bloodiest battle. We mutually recounted the dangers we had run, and the difficulties with which we had struggled to escape with life. "I have lost every thing," said one,

Digitized by Google

" servants, horses, baggage; but I think not of " it; I rather esteem myself most fortunate, that " I have preserved my life, that I have escaped " from the inclemency of the weather, the hor- " rors of famine, and the arms of the enemy." " I have nothing but what I carry about me," said a second, " and of all that I had, I only " wish for some shoes to defend my feet, and " some bread to eat: these are the truest riches." " I have lost all," exclaimed a third, " but I " do not regret it, since the sacrifice of my " baggage has enabled me to save my wounded " brother." Such was the language which we heard, during several successive days; and those who were silent, deeply mused on the dangers which they had passed, and rendered, their secret but fervent thanks to Providence, for a preserva- tion almost miraculous *.

---

* Admiral Tschikagow has been severely and justly censured for permitting the passage of the Beresina. The masterly manœuvres of Wittgenstein and Kutusoff had inspired the hope that the total defeat and captivity of the French army was unavoidable, and the capture of Buonaparte himself was confidently anticipated. It has been said that Napoleon not only expressed the greatest alarm, but absolutely despaired of escape; yet the passage of the Beresina was effected almost without opposition, Labaume well calls it " a preservation almost miraculous."

A caricature was circulated at St. Petersburg, in which Ku-

Digitized by Google

tusoff and Wittgenstein were represented as drawing up the neck of a bag, in which Buonaparte was enclosed, while Tschikagow was cutting a hole at the bottom, by which the caitiff escaped.

See some excellent observations on this subject in the Quarterly Review, Jan. 1815. This number contains a masterly review of the different publications on the Russian Campaign.

Translator's Note.

Digitized by Google

BOOK X.

THE NIEMEN.

The fatal passage of the Beresina having reduced our corps of reserve to the same condition as those who had been as far as Moscow, realized the fatal predictions which had long been announced to us; and, with the exception of our chief (whose life Providence seems to have continued, only to deliver him to greater remorse and despair), all was accomplished.

How dreadful was the punishment of this conqueror, to lose the provinces which he occupied with more rapidity than he had invaded them; to have the melancholy cypress instead of the laurels of victory, and cities smoking with recent slaughter instead of the incense of applause; and finally, as the companions of his triumph, twenty thousand disarmed soldiers, without linen and without stockings, whose only shoes were manufactured from their worn-out hats, and whose shoulders were covered with pieces

Digitized by Google

of sacking, and the skins of horses, newly flayed. These were the deplorable remains of five hundred thousand brave warriors, who, but for the ambition of a single man, would always have been the honour of France, and the terror of their enemies. The cold becoming more severe, increased the disorder of our march, and produced incalculable losses. The second and ninth corps followed the universal example. We could scarcely muster 3000 men to form our rear-guard, of which the Duke of Elchingen (Ney) took the command. In two or three days their numbers were so diminished, that we frequently inquired for the rear-guard when we were in the very centre of it.

(November 29). We arrived very early at the village of Kamen, and were continuing our route to Plescenkovice, when Colaud, commander of the advanced-guard, returned, and announced to us that two thousand cossacks had entered the city, crying "Hourra!" and were massacreing every one whom they found in the streets. "The "Duke of Reggio (Oudinot)," said he, "being "wounded last night, was scarcely able to reach "the place; but fortunately many officers hasten- "ing with the determination to save him, or to "die at his side, excited a fear in the enemy that "we were contriving some ambush. They re- "tired to a neighbouring height, and cannonaded

Digitized by Google

" the marshal's house, to make him capitulate. " As if a fatality pursued the Duke of Reggio, " a cannon-ball striking on a beam, broke off a " splinter, by which he was again slightly " wounded." This officer likewise informed us, " that General Pino had likewise been there, and " that Count Danthouard, on entering Plescen- " kovice, had scarcely time to escape to his car- " riage."

This news determined us to remain at Kamen. The next day (30th November) we set out before daybreak, and passing by Plescenkovice, found that the accounts which we had received on the preceding evening, were not exaggerated. We saw the house where the Duke of Reggio had taken up his quarters, and were surprised that two thousand cossacks had not ventured to carry off by force, a marshal who was only defended by twenty wounded officers. Napoleon halted in this city, but the Viceroy continuing his route, encamped in a deserted village near Zavichio, which, according to the map, was named Niestanovitsch.

(December 1st). On the following day about seven in the morning, the Viceroy, accompanied by a few officers, placed himself at the head of some grenadiers of the royal guard, who yet remained faithful to their colours. After a very long march for men exhausted with fatigue we

Digitized by Google

arrived at the town of Iliïa. The Jews, who formed the majority of the population, had not quitted their houses, and the love of gain induced them to bring out some provisions which they had intended to conceal. We paid them liberally, for in such a situation the poorest nourishment was preferable to gold. Without this assistance we should have lost the brave and estimable Colonel Durieu, whose health had much declined, less perhaps from the deprivations to which he had been exposed, than the ardent zeal with which he fulfilled his important and laborious duties.

(December 2d). The next day's journey to Molodetschino was still more fatiguing and oppressive. We marched for twelve hours through an immense forest without halting. The cold was excessive, but we had this consolation, that the cossacks would no longer harass our right. Captain Jouard, who had been sent to Vileika, to General Wrede, assured us that the Bavarians still maintained that important position.

We were in a pitiable situation when we arrived at Molodetschino. Happily the houses were good, and some of the proprietors, who yet remained, procured us the means of subsistence. The next morning the equipages of Napoleon began to depart. They were scarcely out of the village, when a multitude of cossacks presented

Digitized by Google

themselves, and would have plundered the little baggage which we had hitherto preserved, if the escort had not hastily returned to place itself under the protection of the troops, who yet retained their arms. The Viceroy was preparing for his departure, when it was announced to him that we were to remain at Molodetschino, but that he must evacuate the *chateau* which he occupied, for the use of Napoleon who would soon arrive.

We profitably employed this precious repose in collecting with considerable difficulty a few provisions. Nevertheless many soldiers expired in the streets. The same desolation extended to the houses where the officers lodged. Some were exhausted with excessive fatigue, and protested they could go no further; others, whose feet were frozen, and who had no horses, found themselves obliged, though full of courage, to remain in the hands of the Russians. The generals were exposed to the same calamities, for many of them, having lost their servants and their carriages, were unable to replace them. If the slightest sickness attacked them in these circumstances they expired for want of assistance. Such was our situation in Molodetschino, when Napoleon wrote in characters of blood the fatal 29th bulletin, which made France and her allies a large family of mourners.

Digitized by Google

(December 4th). We quitted the village, but did not take the great road, which leads through Zachkévitschi directly to Smorghoni. We kept to the left of this route, which indeed promised little safety, and pursued a bye-road which conducted us by Lebioda to Markovo. We encamped in this village with some soldiers of the first corps, while the Emperor and his guard were at Bienitsa, about half a league from us.

(December 5th). As we proceeded towards Smorghoni, we crossed some marshy country, which would have been absolutely impassable had it not been for the severity of the season. It was therefore evident to us that these regions are completely defended by their very nature, and that, independent of the rigour of winter, the marshes of Lithuania would have been our grave. When we arrived at this little town, we did not find the resources that had been promised. All the houses were deserted, and the Jews, having hastily fled, had deprived us of their assistance. We found however some casks of biscuits in the magazines, which were immediately devoured.

Napoleon, terrified by so many disasters, and still more so by the fear of losing his authority in France, conceived the idea of abandoning these miserable remains of his army, for the purpose of demanding from his senate new levies: and, tortured by those suspicions that always pursue

Digitized by Google

the despot, he imagined that his allies were eager to dissolve the compact, which had placed them under his iron yoke.

When he arrived at Smorghoni, and had ascertained that the road was safe as far as the Niemen, he determined to carry his purpose into execution, and called together the chiefs of the army. Afterwards he had a private conference with the Viceroy. This being finished, Napoleon issued from his cabinet, followed by the master of the horse (Caulincourt), the marshal of the palace (Duroc), Count de Lobau, and General Lefebre Desnouettes. As he crossed one of the halls, he met the King of Naples, and said to him with an indifferent air, "*Adieu, King of Naples!*" While pronouncing these words, he went out, accompanied by the four persons who were going with him. Being seated in his carriage, he placed at his side General Lefebre and Count Lobau. The master of the horse and the marshal of the palace entered a second carriage, which immediately followed on the route to Wilna. No address was made to the army, no proclamation to the Lithuanians, to reanimate their dejected spirits. The one was without a chief, the other abandoned by him who had promised them every thing.

The King of Naples took the command of the army, but the troops marched with so much dis-

Digitized by Google

order and precipitation, that it was only on their arrival at Wilna, that they were informed of a departure as discouraging as it was unexpected. "What," said they among themselves, "is it thus "that he abandons those of whom he calls him-"self the father? Where is that genius, who "exhorted us to bear our sufferings patiently? "He who lavished our blood, is he afraid to die "with us? Will he treat us like the army of "Egypt, to whom, after having served him faith-"fully, he became indifferent, and whom he "shamefully deserted in the hour of danger?" Such was the conversation of the soldiers, which they accompanied by the most violent execrations. Never was indignation more just, for never were men so worthy of pity.

The presence of the Emperor had kept the chiefs to their duty, but when they heard of his departure, the greater part of them followed his example, and shamefully abandoned the remains of the regiments with which they had been intrusted. Until then we had found, at intervals, some few armed soldiers, who, conducted by their officers, rallied round the standard which they had sworn never to abandon. But when they were deprived of their officers, and unheard-of calamities had thinned their ranks, those brave soldiers, who were intrusted with the immediate charge of the eagles, were reduced to the pain-

Digitized by Google

ful necessity of hiding them in their knapsacks. Many of them, feeling that they were expiring, and knowing that the honour of a French soldier consisted in preserving his colours, dug up the ground with a feeble hand, to save from the Russians those ensigns under which our arms had been raised to the pinnacle of glory.

The division of Loison, which had come before us from Koningsberg, and that of the Neapolitans from Wilna, having been obliged to encamp in a cold of 22 degrees below the freezing point, were totally destroyed, and out of six thousand men, of which each was composed, we could only see, through a thick fog, some feeble battalions running on the road like madmen. They beat the earth with their feet to keep themselves from being benumbed by the frost, and if, unfortunately, they were urged by the wants of nature, they lost the use of their hands, and fell on the ground, to rise again no more. The few who were able to support the fatigue of marching, only prolonged their misery; and if, weary of life, they wished to terminate their sufferings, it was necessary only to stand still.

The road which we followed, offered to our view at every step many brave officers covered with rags, supported by branches of pine, and their hair and beards stiffened by the ice. These warriors, who, a short time before, were the terror

Digitized by Google

of our enemies, and the conquerors of two-thirds of Europe, having now lost their fine appearance, crawled slowly along, and could scarcely obtain a look of pity from the soldiers whom they had formerly commanded. Their situation rapidly became more dreadful. All who had not strength to march were abandoned, and every one who was abandoned by his comrades, in an hour afterwards inevitably perished. On the following morning every bivouack presented the image of a field of battle. Whenever a soldier, overcome with fatigue, chanced to fall, his next neighbour rushed eagerly upon him, and before he was dead, robbed him of all that he possessed, and even of his clothes. Every moment we heard some of these unhappy men crying out for assistance. "My comrades," exclaimed one, with a heart-rending voice, "assist me to rise; "lend me a hand to pursue my march." His old companions pursued their journey without once regarding him. "Ah!" he continued, "I con- "jure you by every thing which is dear to you, "do not abandon me to the enemy. In the "name of humanity grant the little assistance I "ask only to help me to rise." Those who passed, instead of being moved to pity by this touching prayer, regarded him as already dead, and immediately began to strip him. We then heard him crying out, "Oh, help! help! They

Digitized by Google

" murder me; they murder me! Why do you " trample upon me? Why do you snatch from " me my money and my bread, and take from " me even my clothes!" If some generous officers did not arrive in time to preserve them, many of these unfortunate beings were assassinated by their own comrades.

(December 7th). We arrived at Joupranouï a little before night. Being overcome with fatigue, we were obliged to stop there. The ruined houses afforded us no shelter from the rigour of the season. Lying on each other, tormented with hunger, and pierced with cold, we pased the night in groans.

We marched early in the morning (8th December), and arrived at Ochmiana about eleven o'clock. The winter was so severe, that the soldiers burnt whole houses to avoid being frozen. We saw around the fires, the half-consumed bodies of many unfortunate men, who, having advanced too near, in order to warm themselves, and being too weak to recede, had become a prey to the flames. Some miserable beings, blackened with smoke, and besmeared with the blood of the horses which they had devoured, wandered like ghosts around the burning houses. They gazed on the dead bodies of their companies, and, too feeble to support themselves, fell down, and died like them.

Digitized by Google

We expected to have received some provisions in this town, but we were informed that the cossacks had pillaged the magazines, and that Napoleon had passed through half an hour after they were gone. We then continued our route, marching in the midst of the dead and the dying, and at length arrived at the wretched stone *chateau* of Rovno-Polé, where the Prince and his staff passed a miserable night.

Misfortune having equalised all conditions, every thing was confounded. It was in vain that the officers endeavoured to assert their authority; it was insolently denied. The Colonel, who had no food, was obliged to beg a piece of biscuit from the private soldier. The man who possessed provisions, although he were a servant, was surrounded by a crowd of courtiers, who, to obtain the coarsest food, threw aside their rank and distinction, and condescended to caress him. In short, to form an adequate idea of the dreadful disorder to which famine and cold had reduced us, the reader must figure to himself forty thousand men*, of different nations, marching toge-

* This number will appear very considerable, when the enormous losses which we suffered every day are recollected. I ought, however, to observe that the division of Loison, the garrison of Wilna, and the troops which had occupied the other towns of Lithuania, joined the wreck of the army during our retreat.

Digitized by Google

ther, without order and without discipline; ignorant of the road they were going, and only stopping when weariness or caprice impelled them. The officers having formerly accustomed to command, were now the most unfortunate. They were shunned, to avoid rendering them assistance; for, in our situation, even to give a glass of water, or to raise a fellow-soldier from the ground, were offices of kindness which claimed the warmest gratitude.

The route was covered with soldiers who no longer retained the human form, and whom the enemy disdained to make prisoners. Every day rendered us the witnesses of scenes too dreadful to relate. Some had lost their hearing, others their speech, and many were reduced by excessive cold and hunger to a state of frantic stupidity, in which they roasted the dead bodies of their comrades for food, or even gnawed their own hands and arms*. Some were so weak, that, unable to lift a piece of wood, or roll a stone towards the fires which they had kindled, they sat upon the dead bodies of their comrades, and with a haggard countenance, steadfastly gazed upon the burning coals. No sooner was the fire extinguished, than these living spectres, no

* Official Report, published by the Russians at Wilna, 2d December, 1812.

Digitized by Google

longer possessing the power to rise, fell by the side of those on whom they had sat. We saw many who were absolutely delirious. To warm their frozen feet; they plunged them naked into the middle of the fire. Some, with a convulsive laugh, threw themselves into the flames, and uttering the most piercing cries, perished in horrible convulsions: while others, equally insane, immediately followed them, and experienced the same fate.

Such was our situation when we arrived at the village of Roukoni, where some wretched barns alone remained, filled with dead bodies. Being only three leagues from Wilna, many continued their march, that they might arrive in that city before their comrades. At Wilna they hoped not only to find abundance of provisions, but to remain some days and enjoy the repose which they so much needed. The fourth corps, which could not muster more than two hundred men yet faithful to their duty, halted in this wretched village.

At break of day (December 9th) we hastened to quit Roukoni, where the cold and the smoke had prevented us from closing our eyes. When we were commencing our march, the Bavarians, who formed the rear-guard, hastily advanced crying out that the enemy was pursuing them. The evening before, it was reported that they had obtained some advantages over the cossacks; but

Digitized by Google

the disorder in which they now arrived, proved that this intelligence was false. We must however do them the justice to say that they yet retained some pieces of cannon, but the horses were so weak that they could not drag them along.

Every day's march presented a repetition of mournful scenes of which I have given a slight sketch. Our hearts were so hardened by these dreadful spectacles, that they were beheld without emotion. Self-preservation was the only motive which actuated us in the state of barbarism to which we were reduced. Wilna occupied every thought, and the hope that that position would permit us to take some repose, inspired with the most lively joy those who were able to continue their march. They hurried along regardless of the miserable beings who crowded the road, struggling with the agonies of death.

At length we reached the suburbs of this long-wished-for city; but our happiness was sadly alloyed, when we saw the whole of this immense place obstructed by a crowd of carriages, horses, and men. The confusion recalled the Beresina to my mind; and such was our stupidity, that, being accustomed to follow each other in columns, we were afraid of losing ourselves if we ventured a few steps from our companions; and while all were pressing to enter at the same gate, other avenues at the right and left were unobstructed.

Digitized by Google

When we arrived in the city, we found it in extreme disorder. The soldiers were running in every direction to ascertain the quarters assigned to their respective corps. Those of the fourth corps going to the municipality, saw written in large characters, that they were to quarter in the convent of St. Raphael on the other side of the Vilia. Before they went thither they ran like famished men from house to house demanding food. The eating-houses and taverns, not being sufficient for the immense number of guests, were instantly shut up. But hunger determined us to find provisions; and while some were employed in breaking open the doors of the hotels, others, with money in their hands, pursued the Jews, who, notwithstanding the generosity with which we paid them, could not satisfy half our wants.

At Wilna we heard that Napoleon had passsed through *incognito*, escorted by a feeble detachment of three regiments of Neapolitan cavalry, which had been sent before him to clear his route. These poor inhabitants of the south were half dead when they passed in review; scarcely had they departed from Wilna, when a third part of them fell into the rear, having their hands, feet, and noses, entirely frozen. The departure of Napoleon in this disguised manner not only spread consternation among the Lithuanians, who were devoted to us, but sadly discouraged the French

Digitized by Google

troops. The first were indignant at finding themselves abandoned to the resentment of a master, whose yoke they had wished to shake off; the others were alarmed for their own preservation, for, in a situation so critical, they imagined that the absence of our chief must consummate our ruin. Many, however, who felt all the dangers to which we were exposed, yet more anxious for the glory of our arms, than their own safety, thought that his departure was fortunate. "Na-"poleon," said they, "when at Paris, will reor-"ganize a noble army; will secure the peace of "France, and maintain the co-operation of the "allies, whose defection is so much to be "dreaded."

The rear of our long column had scarcely entered the suburbs, at three o'clock in the afternoon, when we heard that the cossacks had taken possession of the heights which command the city. In truth they soon began to fire upon us. At the report of the cannon, the new troops who were in Wilna beat the drum and sounded the trumpet. In an instant the place was in arms. In consequence of the series of unexpected calamities by which Providence often confounds the proud, and punishes the insolent, it happened that the colossal power of Napoleon was so completely reduced in this iron climate, as to have no other support than the remains of a Neapolitan

Digitized by Google

division formed from the garrisons of Tarentum and Capua. These troops being quickly dispersed, terror immediately spread through the city; and at the single word of the "*cossacks*" all the soldiers rushed from their quarters and betook themselves to flight. The King of Naples, forgetting his rank, suddenly abandoned his palace, and followed by his officers, pierced through the crowd, and escaped from the town to encamp on the road to Kowno.

While some of the soldiers flew to arms, others, as night advanced, profiting by the evacuation of the magazines, carried off the clothes and military equipments which had been collected there; hut the greater part searching only for food, knocked at every door, and their redoubled blows seemed the dreadful presage of a universal pillage. The inhabitants, trembling in their houses, dreaded the impending desolution, as they heard the noise of cannon, which thundered from the heights, and the outcries of our troops eager for plunder.

We gave up all hope of repose, and the feeble relics of our army not being able to resist the attacks of the enemy, we determined to profit by the obscurity of the night, and quit a position so dangerous. It was decided that at eleven o'clock we should evacuate the town. The hour being arrived we silently proceeded on our route, leaving the streets covered with soldiers intoxicated,

Digitized by Google

asleep, or dead. The courts, the galleries, the stairs of the various buildings, were filled with them, and not one would march, or even rise, to obey the orders of the officers who called him. After leaving Wilna, with as much difficulty as we entered it, the Prince and his staff went to the King of Naples, where all the officers remained till one o'clock in the morning.

In the middle of a dark night (10th December) we marched on the road to Kowno, but the snow which covered the country caused us to wander every moment, and left us for a long time uncertain of the road; while the Poles going to New-Troki, had left the traces of another route which was calculated to mislead us. Two hours afterwards we arrived at the foot of a mountain inaccessible on account of its steepness, and the ice with which it was covered. All around were the remains of the equipages of Napoleon, the baggage left at Wilna, the treasures of the army, and the waggons containing the fatal trophies brought from Moscow, so that we no longer doubted that we were on the road to Kowno.

While we were groaning at the foot of this mountain, without the power to climb it, we distinctly heard the firing between the cossacks and the riflemen of the 29th of the line, which had lately joined us, and which in these critical circumstances maintained their former reputation.

Digitized by Google

Actuated by that discontent and ill-humour which misfortune inspires, many exclaimed that it would have been better to have gone to New-Troki, and to have avoided this fatal mountain. All who were thus arrested here, and who were mostly sick or wounded, considered themselves as a certain prey to the enemy. Their grief was increased by the reflection that they must perish after having escaped the dangers of Krasnoë and the Beresina, and so nearly reached the wished-for port. Their grief was soon changed to despair, when we heard that the cossacks, having passed Wilna, had pursued our rear-guard, and were advancing upon us. Dire necessity, however, compelled us to wait till the dawn of day, that we might discover whether there were any means of going round the mountain, which our horses could not climb. In this interval we kindled a fire, and every one deeply sighing impatiently waited the return of day.

We searched every where in vain; the mountain was so steep, the road so slippery, and the horses so fatigued, that we despaired of escape. The idea then occurred to us of compelling the soldiers of the escort to carry the money belonging to the military chest. It contained about five millions, the greatest part of which was in crowns. We had little doubt, however, that the soldiers, whom it was impos-

Digitized by Google

sible to watch or to detect, would carry off for their own use that which was intrusted to their care. The standards taken from the enemy, respecting which these venal wretches were no longer interested, were cowardly abandoned at the foot of the mountain. Among these was the famous cross of St. Iwan, which would have made so glorious an addition to our trophies, if the Russians, whom we termed barbarians, had not given us the noble example of a moderation which rarely accompanies victory.

The followers of the camp augmented the number of plunderers, and it was truly curious to see those who were dying with hunger, laden with more riches than they could possibly carry. They saw the money distributed among them, with the most perfect indifference, and searched in preference for the coarsest food. Trunks and portmanteaus broken open and robbed, were seen in every direction. The most superb court dresses, and the richest furs, were worn by those whose countenances were hideous and disgusting. Returning from the pillage, many of them offered sixty francs for a louis, and some gave ten crowns for a glass of brandy. One of the soldiers, in my presence, offered to sell a cask filled with silver, for a few pieces of gold: it was bought by a superior officer who placed it on his sledge.

It is impossible to form an adequate idea of the

Digitized by Google

confusion which our army now presented. Far from being reanimated by the presence of some battalions lately arrived from Prussia, the terror which overwhelmed us, was soon communicated to them, and unable to endure the rigour of the season, they likewise threw away their arms, and increased the crowd of stragglers. In fine, our soldiers, transformed into brokers, only sought to sell the plunder which they had acquired, and they eagerly found sufficient purchasers in those who had pillaged the military chest. Every one spoke familiarly of ingots and jewels. Every soldier was laden with silver, but none with a musket. Ought we to be astonished at the fears which the cossacks inspired?

In this state of confusion, after five hours' distressing march we reached Evé, about ten leagues from Wilna. We had scarcely entered it when the Count Mejan*, supported by his son and the valet de chambre of the Prince, arrived. This unfortunate father, to whose generous devotion to the service I regret that the limits of my work will not permit me to do justice, had been obliged to travel on foot from the mountain of Wilna

* Counsellor of State of the kingdom of Italy, and Secretary to the Viceroy. He had been present during the whole campaign with his two sons, and heard at the Beresina, that his youngest son had been killed at the battle of Polotsk.

Digitized by Google

across a country covered with snow. But this nobleman, whose courage had often astonished us, and who, though not a soldier, had borne with patience his full share of the sufferings to which we were subjected, was so ardently attached to the Prince, that he quite forgot the misfortunes of the day as soon as he found himself in the presence of his Highness.

Similar miseries happened to others. The Prince of Eckmuhl, weakened by a fever, could only travel in a carriage. Generals Laribois-siere, Eblé, Lahoussaye, &c., suffered very severely. The Quarter-Master-General Joubert, who had long been destitute of servants, had been left in this village, in a situation so miserable that he excited the tears of all who saw him. We were equally anxious respecting the fate of many other sick officers who remained with the baggage of the Prince. In the evening we ascertained, that owing to the skill and extraordinary activity of the Adjutant of the palace Boutarel, the baggage-waggons had passed by New-Troki to avoid the mountain of Wilna, and that it was only the length of the journey which prevented them from arriving at Evé.

(December 11). As we quitted this village, we were informed by those who had escaped from Wilna, that the Russians had entered it at day-

Digitized by Google

break. A crowd of generals, colonels, and officers, and more than twenty thousand soldiers, who were detained by weakness, fell into their hands. They added, that the officers had been well treated, but that every soldier or servant was immediately ordered to Moscow, to be employed in rebuilding the city. These unfortunate men lying in the streets, or squares, without fire, without food, and most of them wounded or sick, presented a spectacle so afflicting, that the enemy endeavoured to mitigate their sufferings. The least to be pitied, were those who, having been plundered by the cossacks, died shortly after our departure. We now had a thousand proofs of human weakness! the same men who had dragged themselves along from Moscow to Wilna, wanted courage to pursue their course a few leagues more, when that little more would have ensured their existence. We heard also that the Jews had ill-treated many of our soldiers, particularly those of the imperial guard, to avenge themselves for the losses which they had suffered; but the Russians, with that justice which always characterised them, hung many of these Israelites, as a lesson to the people that they should not mingle their passions with the quarrels of sovereigns.

The rear of our long column, which covered

Digitized by Google

all the road with the dead and the dying, was continually followed by a cloud of cossacks, who pillaged our soldiers, and afterward left them to the custody of the peasants, who carried them into the rear, after treating them with a thousand indignities. At length the Russians, weary of making prisoners, liberated all the soldiers belonging to the confederation of the Rhine, and contented themselves with detaining officers of distinction. But when they seized a Frenchman, miserable as he was, they stripped him, and treated him with the greatest ridicule. If he marched with them during the night, he was ordered to fetch water or wood. They afterwards brutally drove him from the fire which he had kindled. Such was the fatal lot of the soldiers, who, compelled to fight, are always the principal victims of the calamities which flow from the quarrels of the kings*.

* A cossack officer, who spoke very good French, overtook one of our sutlers. The poor fellow earnestly implored mercy, exclaiming that he was not a soldier. He then offered his purse to satisfy the cossacks. Not content with this prize, they began to search him, and found in his pockets boxes of gold, diamonds, and numerous rings enriched with precious stones, which he had taken at the pillage of Moscow. At the sight of this, the officer could not restrain his indignation, and said to the sutler, "See "to what your avarice has reduced you. In the hope of plun-

Digitized by Google

Before we arrived at Zismori, we heard a cannonade at our rear, and at no great distance; we hence concluded that our feeble rear-guard was briskly pursued. Notwithstanding this, the fatigue of the troops was so great, that many, preferring repose to safety, halted at Zismori; but the Viceroy went on to the village of Roumchichki.

(December 12). Exhausted by long and harassing marches, and dying with fatigue, we at length arrived at Kowno, where the wrecks of the different corps were reunited. They encamped as usual in the streets, as we knew that our deplorable situation no longer permitted us to preserve any discipline, we gave up to pillage the magazines, which were amply stored. Immediately clothes, corn, and rum, were every where

---

"der, you have followed the armies to share in their booty, with-
"out partaking of their dangers. In obtaining these much-
"desired riches, you have been enfeebled by their weight, and
"could not escape my pursuit. I could justly send you cap-
"tive to the city you have ravaged; but you are too miserable
"to rebuild that which you have destroyed. Return if you can
"to France; and when you speak of our clemency, describe to
"your fellow-citizens the miserable state to which they expose
"themselves, who trouble the peace of the world, by following
"the standards of an unjust aggressor." At these words he left him to the cossacks, who, disdaining to make him prisoner, drove him before them, beating him with the handles of their lances.—1st edition.

Digitized by Google

seen in abundance. Our quarters were filled with broken casks, and the liquor which was spilled formed a little sea in the middle of the public square. The soldiers, having long been deprived of this liquor, drank to excess, and more than two thousand of them, completely intoxicated, slept upon the snow. Benumbed with cold, they all perished.

It was announced in the evening, that the fourth corps would take the road to Tilsit; and as many of us, to avoid the strange confusion which generally prevailed, had been accustomed to sleep one or two leagues beyond the head-quarters, a great number set out towards that town. In the middle of the night, the chief of the staff came to look for the fourth corps, which was literally enclosed in a single room. He told us that the order had been revoked, and that we were to proceed to Gumbinnen instead of Tilsit. This order and counter-order completed our ruin. From that time, the fourth corps consisted only of the household of the Prince, and about eight or ten staff-officers.

(December 13). As we left Kowno on the morrow, we found the same tumult which we had experienced at the gate of Wilna. The crowd was pressing towards the bridge, although the Niemen was frozen hard enough to have borne the weight of artillery. In Kowno and its en-

Digitized by Google

virons, we saw a great number of unfortunate soldiers lying on the snow, who had perished when they so nearly reached the end of this fatal expedition. We were particularly affected at seeing Colonel Vidman among the dead. He was one of the small number of the Italian guards of honour, who had hitherto sustained the same hardships as ourselves; but now exhausted by fatigue he fell, as he was leaving Kowno to cross the bridge, and expired, without having the satisfaction of dying out of Russia.

The calamities of the army had extended to the imperial guard, and many of its soldiers died every day from hunger, cold, and fatigue. Among these victims I saw one truly worthy of admiration. He was an old grenadier. As he lay expiring on the bridge of Kowno, the crowd, which rushed by him, respected his uniform, his decorations, and above all, his three chevrons. This brave man seemed to await his death with the utmost firmness, and disdained to have recourse, like many others, to useless supplications. By chance, some of his comrades passed by. He then made a last effort to rise, but unable to accomplish it, and feeling himself dying, he summoned all his strength, and said to one of his companions who approached to assist him, "Cease, my friend. "Do not lavish on me superfluous assistance. "The only favour I ask, is that you would pre-

Digitized by Google

" vent the enemy from profaning the honourable
" distinctions that I have gained in fighting
" against them. Carry to my captain this deco-
" ration, which was given to me on the field of
" Austerlitz; take him likewise my sabre; I
" used it in the battle of Friedland*." His comrade obeyed him, and receiving the sabre and the cross, rejoined the old guard, which, although reduced to 300 men, still marched in close order, and retained to the last its bold and warlike appearance. As we followed those brave men, we admired the undaunted courage which they exhibited in the midst of so many calamities, and pitied their deplorable fate. Glowing with love for their country, they rendered it illustrious at the expense of their lives, and in their short career of glory, far surpassed all that Rome had exhibited of patriotism and of bravery in the space of eight centuries.

On the morning of the 13th of December, out of four hundred thousand warriors who had crossed the *Niemen* at the opening of the campaign, scarcely twenty thousand men repassed it, of whom at least two-thirds had not seen the Kremlin. Being arrived at the opposite bank,

* This trait of heroism was common with the soldiers of the Royal Italian Guard. General Theodore Lecchi, who commanded it in the Russian campaign, has many of the insignia of the Iron Crown, which were intrusted to him in a similar manner.

Digitized by Google

like ghosts returned from the infernal regions, we fearfully looked behind us, and beheld with horror the savage countries in which we had suffered so much. No person would then easily believe that we had once regarded these climates with envy, and thought those dishonoured who arrived at them last.

After crossing the bridge, we turned to the left to reach Gumbinnen. Many wished to go to the right, still thinking, after the order of the preceding evening, that they must march to Tilsit. They who followed the proper road had not proceeded far, when they were obliged to climb a lofty mountain prodigiously steep, and which would have been fatal to our equipages, if we had not long ago been deprived of them. Many carts and carriages which were in the depôt of Kowno, and a superb park of artillery, lately arrived from Koningsberg, were left at the foot of this hill.

Scarcely had we arrived in Poland, when our soldiers dispersed in different roads, and wandered, like simple travellers, in the same country which, six months before, had been covered with our numerous armies. The Duke of Elchingen, who commanded our rear-guard, as far as the Niemen, lost the few troops which he had hitherto preserved. That great captain, after having passed the river, in the month of June, at the

Digitized by Google

head of 43,000 men, now repassed it, attended only by his aide-de-camps, and with their feeble assistance nobly repulsed the attacks of the cossacks.

In the evening the King of Naples and the Prince halted at Skrauda. The same morning (14th December), when we departed from this village, the cossacks entered Kowno, passed the Niemen, which was frozen at every point, and spread themselves over the immense plains of Poland, where they massacred or captured many of our scattered soldiers, who, not imagining that the Russians would pass the Niemen, thought that they were safe.

From Skrauda many took the direction of Thorn; but the Viceroy still continued to follow the road of Gumbinnen, and arrived in this little town after having slept at Pillwizken, Virballen, and Darkehmen (14th, 15th, 16th, and 17th, December). Thence he sent General Gifflenga, his aide-de-camp, to Koningsberg, to order all those of the 4th corps, who had taken the road of Tilsit, to proceed to Marienwerder.

Koningsberg being the first great city in the vicinity of our march was soon filled with those who, having escaped from Moscow, hoped now to recover from the misfortunes which they had suffered. The coffee-houses, the restaurateurs, the furnished hotels, could scarcely at any price

Digitized by Google

satisfy all our wants. It was necessary to pierce through a crowd to enter any of them. The cold was terrible, but the delicious sensation of knowing that we could now defend ourselves against it, and moreover the pleasure of obtaining whatever we desired, were still more heightened, since six months of continual hardships had deprived us of every thing in which the comfort of life consisted.

The King of Naples came to Koningsberg, where he was coldly received by the principal authorities of the town. The chiefs of each corps placed themselves in cantonments along the Vistula, and occupied the towns of Plock, Thorn, Marienburg, Marienwerder, and Elbing. During this time the Viceroy, having quitted Gumbinnen, passed by Insterburg and Wehlau (18th, 19th, December), to visit the fields of Friedland, Eylau, and Heilsberg (20th, 21st, 22d, December); thus furnishing himself even in these unhappy circumstances, with subjects for useful meditation. The remembrance of our former greatness, and the noble struggle which we had now sustained, against unparalleled sufferings, inspired the inhabitants of these countries with unfeigned admiration. As we travelled through Prussia, even our enemies respected our misfortunes, and concealing their hatred, scru-

Digitized by Google

pulously refrained from insulting the venerable remains of so magnificent an army.

(27th December). His Highness arrived at Marienwerder, where he occupied himself in collecting all that remained of the fourth corps. After every research, we succeeded in mustering about eight hundred wounded, the miserable wreck of forty-eight thousand warriors, all of whom had marched from Italy to Russia. They were the victims, not of the arms of the enemy, but of the fatal imprudence of their chief, who, not satisfied with having subjugated the best half of Europe, wished to contend with the elements, for a country which consisted only of deserts. The Viceroy afterwards despatched towards France and Italy those officers and soldiers whose infirmities would not permit them to undertake another campaign. He rewarded every soldier who had behaved well, and punished, by the most sensible disgraces, the few who had dishonoured themselves by a cowardly and pusillanimous conduct.

Such were the dreadful calamities that annihilated a powerful army, which had rashly undertaken the proudest and the most useless of all expeditions. If we look into the annals of antiquity, we shall find that never, since the time of Cambyses, did so numerous a body of men

Digitized by Google

experience such dreadful reverses. The boastful predictions of Napoleon at the campaign were literally fulfilled, but with this difference, that not Russia, but himself, "hurried away by a fatality, had accomplished his destiny." These calamities have had one happy result, by putting an end to a despotic influence they have restored to Europe her liberty, and to France her happiness.

END OF THE NARRATIVE.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

ITINERARY

Of the March of the Fourth Corps in the Russian Territory, during the Campaign of 1812.

		Leagues.
1 July,	1812, from Pilony to Kroni	1
2	—— Melangani	7
3	—— Rouicontoui	6
4	—— New-Troki	3
5	—— Halted.	
6	—— Halted.	
7	—— Rudniki	7
8	—— Paradomin	3
9	—— Halted.	
10	—— Paulovo	4
	(At the castle of the Count of Choiseuil).	
11	—— Ochmiana	6¼
12	—— Smorghoni	8
13	—— Halted.	
14	—— From Smorghoni to Zachkevitschi	3¼
15	—— Vileika	8
16	—— Kostenevitschi	6
17	—— Dolghinow	4⅛
18	—— Dokzice	7
19	—— Halted.	
20	—— Berezino	6⅛
21	—— Pouichna	6⅛
22	—— Kamen	6
23	—— Botscheikovo	3⅜
	Carried forward	96⅜

The Emperor Napoleon passed the Niemen at Kowno, the 24th June; the 22d, being at Wilkowiski, he declared war against Russia. The fourth corps, commanded by the Viceroy of Italy, passed the Niemen at Pilony, the advanced-guard effected its passage on the 29th; but the Prince and the fifteenth division passed on the 1st of July. On the 28th Napoleon was at Wilna.

Digitized by Google

		Leagues.
	Brought over	96¾
24 July,	From Smorghoni to Bezenkovitschi	4
25 ——	Soritza (three leagues on this side Ostrowno)	4½
26 ——	Combat (Bivouack at small castle Dobrijk)	5½
27 ——	Bivouack before Witepsk	2½
28 ——	Bivouack at Aghaponovchtchina	5½
29 ——	Sourai	5
30 ——	Halted.	
1 August	Ditto.	
2 ——	Ditto.	
3 ——	Ditto.	
4 ——	Ditto.	
5 ——	Ditto.	
6 ——	Ditto.	
7 ——	Ditto.	
8 ——	Ditto.	
9 ——	From Sourai to Janowitschi	4
10 ——	Halted.	
11 ——	Velechkovitschi	3½
12 ——	Liozna	2½
13 ——	Liouvavitschi	5¼
14 ——	Rasasna	4
15 ——	Siniaki	7¼
16 ——	Katova	3
17 ——	Bivouack (at a league from Korouitnia)	5
18 ——	Bivouack (near the *chateau* of Novoidvor)	5
19 ——	Suburb of Smolensk	1½
20 ——	Passed the Dnieper (Bivouack above Smolensk)	¾
21 ——	Bivouack same place.	
22 ——	Ditto.	
23 ——	Volodimerowa	6
24 ——	Pologhi	7½
25 ——	Zazelé	5½
26 ——	Mikaelovskoe	7½
27 ——	Agopochina (passed the Niemen at Blaghove)	4½
28 ——	Bivouack (round a *chateau*) a league beyond Bereaki	4
29 ——	From Agopochina to Novoe	9
30 ——	Halted.	
31 ——	Pokrow	6¾
1 September	Paulova	6½
2 ——	Woremiewo	2
	Carried forward	224½

Digitized by Google

		Leagues.
	Brought forward	224½
3 September	Halted.	
4 ———	Louzos	5½
5 ———	Encamped on the heights of Borodino	4
6 ———	Ditto.	
7 ———	Battle.	
8 ———	Ouspenskoe, or Krasnoë	3¼
9 ———	Rouza	6¼
10 ———	Halted.	
11 ———	Alpalchtchouina	4½
12 ———	Zwenighorod	3½
13 ———	Buzaievo	6½
14 ———	Khorechevo	4¾
15 ———	Moscow	2
Total from Pilony to Moscow		264¾
	Stopped in this city from 15th September, until	
18 October.	Village on the road from Kaluga, a league from Moscow	1
19 ———	Little village, near Batoutinka bivouack	5
20 ———	Inatowo	7½
21 ———	Fominskoe	3
22 ———	Halted.	
23 ———	From Fominskoe to a village half a league beyond Borovsk bivouack	7¼
24 ———	Battle of Malo-Jaroslavitz. Bivouack	4¼
25 ———	Halted.	
26 ———	Ouvarovskoe bivouack	4
27 ———	Alfereva	4½
28 ———	Village a league beyond Borisov, supposed to be Mitiaéva	2½
29 ———	Ouspenskoe, called Krasnoë bivouack	5½
30 ———	Village ½ league on the right of the road between Kolotskoi and Prokofevo, bivouack	6
31 ———	Ghiat, bivouack	8¼
1 November.	Near Velitschevo, bivouack	5
2 ———	Fœderovskoe, bivouack	6¼
3 ———	Battle of Viazma bivouack, ½ league further	3½
4 ———	Rouibki, a league beyond Semlevo	7
5 ———	Jolkov Postola Door	3½
6 ———	Doroghobouï bivouack	6
	Carried forward	90

Digitized by Google

		Leagues.
	Brought over	90
7 November.	From Fominskoe to Zazelé bivouack	7
8 ———	Sloboda bivouack	4
9 ———	From Sloboda passed the Wop, bivouacked at a little village half a league from this river	1
10 ———	Doukhovchtchina	4
11 ———	Halted.	
12 ———	Wolodimerowa, bivouack	6⅔
13 ———	Smolensko	5¼
14 ———	Halted.	
15 ———	Hamlet three leagues from Smolensko, supposed to be Loubna	3½
16 ———	Krasnoë	7
17 ———	Liadoui	4½
18 ———	Doubrowna	8
19 ———	Orcha	4
20 ———	Halted.	
21 ———	Half a league before Kokanovo, bivouack	5
22 ———	Bivouack round a castle half a league this side Tolschin	5
23 ———	Bivouack three leagues from Toloschin, near Jablonka	4
24 ———	Bobr	4
25 ———	Natscha five leagues from Bobr, where there is an insulated church, bivouack	5½
26 ———	From a village at Memonitsa, to two and a half leagues on this side Borisov, bivouack	5½
27 ———	Studzianca, passage of the Beresina, bivouack	4½
28 ———	Zembin, bivouack	4½
29 ———	Kamen	3¼
30 ———	Niestanovitschi, near Zavichino	6
1 December.	Iliia	4¼
2 ———	Molodetschino	6
3 ———	Halted.	
4 ———	Village supposed to be Markovo, bivouack	7
5 ———	Smorghoni	4½
6 ———	Joupranoui	5
7 ———	Rovno-Pole, bivouack	5
8 ———	Roukoni, bivouack	5½
9 ———	Wilna	5
	Carried forward	234½

Digitized by Google

		Leagues.
	Brought forward	234½
10 December. Eve, bivouack		10
11 ——— Zismori		6
12 ——— Kowno		10
	Total	260½
	From Niemen to Moscow	264½
	Total	525½

A LIST

Of all the Persons mentioned in this Work, with their Rank during the Campaign of Russia.

NAPOLEON.

Jerome Buonaparte, King of Westphalia, Commander of the 8th Corps.

Joachim Murat, King of Naples, Commander of all the Cavalry.

Eugene de Beauharnois, Viceroy of Italy, Commander of the 4th Corps.

Berthier, Prince of Neufchatel and of Wagram, Major-General.

Davoust, Prince of Eckmuhl, Commander of 1st Corps.

Oudinot, Duke of Reggio, do. 2d.

Ney, Duke of Elchingen, do. 3d. Prince of Moskwa.

Prince Poniatowski, do. 5th.

Marshal Count St. Cyr, do. 6th.

General Count Regnier, do. 7th.

Junot, Duke of Abrantes, do. 8th.

Victor, Duke of Belluno, do. 9th.

Duke of Tarentum, do. 10th.

Duke of Treviso, Commander of the Young Guard.

Prince Schwartzenberg, Commander of the Austrian Auxiliary Corps.

Beesieres, Duke of Istria, Commander of the Cavalry of the Guard.

Caulincourt, Duke of Vicenza, General of Division, Master of the Horse.

Digitized by Google

Durock, Duke of Frioul, do. Grand Marshal of the Palace.
Count Rapp, do.
Count Lauriston, do.
Count de Lobau, do.
} Aides-de-Camp to the Emperor.
Count Lefebre Desnouettes, General of Division, Colonel of the Horse-Chasseurs of the Guard.
Count Nansouty,
Count Grouchy,
Count Montbrun,
Count Latour Maubourg,
} Commanders of Cavalry Corps, and Generals of Divisions.
General Dessoles, Chief of the Viceroy's Staff.
Baron Guilleminot, do.
Count Danthouard, Commander of the Artillery of the Fourth Corps.
Count Lariboissier, General of Division, Inspector-General of Artillery.
Count Sortin, do. Commander of the Artillery of the Guards.
Baron Pernetti, do. Commander of the Artillery of the 1st Corps.
Baron Fouche, do. do. 4th Corps.
Count Eblé, General of Division of Artillery, Commander of the Bridge Equipages.
Count Gudin,
Baron Gerard,
Count Dessaix,
Count Friant,
Count Compans,
Count Morand,
} Generals of Division—1st Corps.
Count Verdier,
Count Legrand,
Count Maison,
Baron Merle,
} Generals of Division—2d Corps.
Baron Ledru, Commander of a Division—3d Corps.
Count of Claparede, General of Division, Commander of the Legion of the Vistula.
Baron Delzons,
Count Broussier,
Count Pino,
} Generals of Divisions—4th Corps.
Baron Wrede,
General De Roy,
} Bavarian Generals—6th Corps.
General Sierbein,
Dombrowski,
Zoiousheck,
} Do. 7th Corps.

Digitized by Google

Count Parthonneaux,
Baron Girard,
General Daendals,
General Damas,
} Generals of Divisions—9th Corps.

Baron Grandjean, Commander of a Division—10th Corps.

General Grawert,
General Kleist,
} Prussian Generals—10th Corps.

Baron Roquet, General of Division, Commander of the Fusileers of the Imperial Guard.

Count Charpentier, General of Division, Governor of Smolensko.

Count Baraguay d'Hilliers, General of Division.

Count Loison, Commander of a Division, from Koningsberg.

General Frederic, Commander of the 4th Division (1st Corps).

Count Sanson, General of Division, Chief of the Topographical Bureau.

Baron Haxo, General of Division of Engineers.

Count Sebastiani,
Baron Lahoussaye.
Count Bruyères,
Baron de St. Germain,
Count Defrane,
Baron Chastel,
Count Ornano,
Baron Wathier,
Count Fournier,
Baron Pajol,
Baron Castex,
Baron Doumerc,
} Generals of Divisions of Cavalry.

Count Preyssing, Commander of a Division of Light Bavarian Cavalry.

Prince Czartoryski, Grand Marshal of the Diet of Warsaw.

Count Mejean, Counsellor of State of the Kingdom of Italy, and Secretary of the Viceroy.

General Boitevin (Baron Maureillan), Commander of the Engineers of the 4th Corps.

Baron Aubrey, Commander of Artillery of 2d Corps.

Baron Dode, Commander of Engineers.

GENERALS OF BRIGADE.

Barons Ricard, Roussel, Huard, Plausanne, Bonami, Nagle, Augereau, Marion, Compere, Villata, Fontane, Levie, Chastel, Berkheim, Colbert, Castex, Saint Geniez, Aug. Caulincourt, Pajol, Guyon, Bourdesoult, Bachelu, Thiry, Lanabare,

Digitized by Google

Graudeau, Dalton, Dommarget, Laurency, Grabowski, Fischey, Delantre, Le Camus, Blantont, Pampelone, Poltré, Chouard, Ameys, Corbineau, Heyligers.
Pouget, General of Brigade, Governor of Witepsk.
Lecchi, ditto ditto, Commander of the Italian Guard.
Lepel, Aide-de-Camp to the King of Westphalia.
Dery, Aide-de-Camp to the King of Naples.
Klengel, General in the Saxon service.
General Jomini, Governor of Orcha.
Marthod, Letort, } Major of the Dragoon Guards.
Baron Triaire, General of Brigade, Aide-de-Camp to the Viceroy.
Baron Gifflenga ditto ditto.
Baron Lacroix, Colonel, ditto.
Count Louis Tascher Lapagerie, ——— Charles Labedoyere, ——— Maurice Mejan, ——— Jules Deseve, } Chiefs of Squadrons.
Bellisomi, Master of the Horse to the Viceroy.
Colonel Delfanti, Officer of the Ordnance to the Viceroy.
Andrè Corner, Lieutenant ditto.
Sanoi, ditto.
Liedot, Colonel of Engineers.
Marbœuf, Colonel of Lancers.
Kliski, Polish Colonel, with the Viceroy.
Radzivil, Colonel of the 8th Polish Hulans.
Dalbignac, Adjutant-Commander of the 2d Corps.
Durieu, Adjutant-Commander, Sub-Chief of the Staff of the 4th Corps.
De Bourmont, Asselin, Forestier, } Adjutant-Commanders attached to this Staff.
Colonel Grosbon, of the 53d Regiment.
——— Battaglia, Commander of the Italian Guards of Honour.
——— Gueheneue, 26th Light Troops.
——— Vidman, Commander of the Company of the Venetian Guards of Honour.
——— Demay, Commander of the Artillery of the 13th Division.
——— Banco, of the 2d Italian Horse Chasseurs.
——— Rambourg, of the 3d ditto.
——— Peraldi of the Chasseurs of the Italian Guard.
D'Oreille, Major of the Spanish Regiment of Joseph Napoleon.

Digitized by Google

Vives, Major of Artillery.
Turenne, Grammont, } Aides-de-camp to Count Grouchy.
Colaud, Chief of Battalion, Waggon-Master-General of the 4th Corps.
Sevelinge, ditto, attached to the Staff.
Tempie, Lieutenant-Commander of the Marines of the Italian Guard.
Delahage, Laiynelot, Guibert, } Captains of Engineers.
Boutarel, Captain of Horse Chasseurs, Adjutant of the Palais Royal of Monza.
Trezel, Captain, Aide-de-Camp of General Guilleminot.
Maisonneuve, Jouard, Evrard, } Assistant Captains of the Staff of the 4th Corps.
Morlaincourt, Captain of Engineers to the 4th Division.
Bonardelle, Captain of Artillery.
Octave de Segur, Ferrari, } Officers of Hussars.
Guyard, Savary, } Captains of the 9th of the line.
Lelande Maupertius, Lieutenant of the Reg. of the Voltigeurs of the Guard.
Bordoni, Mastini, } Lieutenants in the Italian Guards of Honour.
Saint Marcellin de Fontanes, attached to the Staff of the 4th Corps.
Lesseps, French Consul at Moscow.
Villeblanche, Auditor of the Council of State, Intendant of Smolensko.

ALEXANDER I. Emperor of Russia.
Grand Duke Constantine.
Prince Kutusoff, Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Army.
Barclay de Tolly, Commander-in-Chief before the arrival of Prince Kutusoff.
Count Wittgenstein, Commander of the 1st Russian Corps.

Generals { Bagawout, ... ditto .... 2d do.
Schomoaloff, .. ditto .... 3d do.
Tutschkoff, ... ditto .... 4th do.
Prince Bagration, ditto .... 5th do. } Forming the
Doctorow, ... ditto .... 6th do. } Second Army
Tormasow, ... ditto .... 7th do. } of the West.

Digitized by Google

Admiral Tschikakoff, Commander of the Russian Army of the Danube.

General Langeron,
——— Lambert,
——— Woinow,
——— Tschaplitr,
——— Paklin,
} Commanding the Divisions of the Army of the Danube.

Platoff, Hetman of the Cossacks.
Platoff, son.
Orlow Dennisow, General of the Advanced-guard.

Kamenski,
Ertel,
Sacken,
Marcoff,
Repnin,
Casanowa,
} Generals Commanders in Volhynia.

Koulniew,
Stengel,
} Generals, Commanders in the Corps of Prince Wittgenstein.

Sicverse, General, employed in the 2d Army of the West.

Ostermann,
Bennigsen,
Skallon,
Woronsow,
Otschakoff,
Kanovitzen,
Gregoff,
Rajewski,
Kropswitski,
Strogonoff,
Boekmetieff,
Ouvarow,
Balla,
} Generals employed in the Centre of the Russian Army.

Koulniew, General of Light Cavalry.
Koff, General of Cavalry.

Milloradowitch,
Winzingerode,
Czernichew,
} Generals commanding the advanced-guard of Prince Kutusoff.

Archbishop Platon.
Bishop Augustin, Vicar of Moscow.

Rastopshin,
Momonoff,
Orlow,
Saltikoff,
Shgrimitow,
} Nobles of Moscow.

Digitized by Google

A STATEMENT

Of the different Corps composing the Grand French Army, which marched against Russia, from March 1*st, to September* 1*st*, 1812.

		Men.	Horses.
The Staff. — The Prince of Neuchatel Major-General (Berthier).	Badeners, Hessians, Saxons, Neuchatalese, 28th Chasseurs, &c.	4000	1150
First Corps. — The Prince of Eckmuhl (Davoust).	1st Division, General Morand, 13th Light Infantry, 17th, 30th of the line, Badeners, &c.	14,400	1050
	2d Division, General Friant, 15th Light Infantry, 33d, 48th of the line, Spaniards, &c.	15,900	1100
	3d Division, General Gudin, 7th Light Infantry, 12th, 21st, 127th of the line, Strelitzers, &c.	15,500	1050
	4th Division, General Dessaix, 33d Light Infantry, 85th, 108th of the line, Hessians, &c.	13,700	1100
	5th Division, General Compans, 25th, 27th, 61st, 111th of the line, &c.	17,500	1200
	Cavalry, General Girardin, 1st, 2d, 3d, Chasseurs, 9th, Poles, &c.	3800	3800
	Artillery, Engineers, &c.	2300	2200

Digitized by Google

		Men.	Horses.
Second Corps. — The Duke of Reggio (Oudinot.)	6th Division, General Legrand, 26th Light Infantry, 55th, 19th, 128th of the line, Portuguese, &c.	14,000	800
	8th Division, Gen. Verdier, 11th Light Infantry, 2d, 37th, 124th of the line, &c.	13,200	900
	9th Division, General Merle, 123d of the line, Swiss, Croats, &c.	12,200	800
	Cavalry, General Castex, 7th, 20th, 24th, 28th, Chasseurs, 8th Light Horse, &c.	3200	3200
	Artillery, Engineers, &c.	1500	1300
Third Corps. — The Duke of Elchingen (Ney).	10th Division, General Ledru, 24th Light Infantry, 46th, 72d, 129th of the line, Portuguese, &c.	13,000	800
	11th Division, General Razout, 4th, 18th, 93d of the line, Illyrians, Portuguese, &c.	14,000	800
	25th Division, General Marchand, Wirtemburghers, &c.	10,000	500
	Cavalry, General Woelwarth, 4th, 28th, Chasseurs, 6th Light Horse, 11th Hussars, Wirtemburghers, &c.	4000	4000
	Artillery Engineers, &c.	2800	2600
Fourth Corps. — The Prince Viceroy (Eugene de Beauharnois).	13th Division, General Delzons, 8th Light Infantry, 84th, 92d, 106th of the line, Croats	13,700	800
	14th Division, General Broussier, 18th Light Infantry, 9th, 35th, 53d of the line, Spaniards	13,000	800
	15th Division, General Pino, Italians, Dalmatians	14,000	900
	Cavalry, General Guyon, 9th, 19th, Chasseurs, Italians	2900	2700
	Royal Italian Guard, General Lecchi	6200	2800
	Artillery, Engineers, &c.	2600	2500

Digitized by Google

		Men.	Horses.
Fifth Corps. — Prince Poniatowski.	16th Division, General Zaionscheck, Poles, &c.	12,000	800
	17th Division, General Dombrowski, *id.*	12,000	800
	18th Division, General Kamieniecki, *id.*	9300	700
	Cavalry, General Kaminski, *id.*	4000	4200
	Artillery, Engineers, &c.	22,000	2600
Sixth Corps. — Marshal Gouvion Saint-Cyr.	19th Division, General Deroy, Bavarians, &c.	2200	400
	20th Division General Wrede, *id.*	12,700	500
	Cavalry, General de Seydewitz, *id.*	2000	2100
	Artillery, Engineers, &c.	500	800
Seventh Corps. — General Regnier.	21st Division, General Lecoq, Saxons, &c.	7,800	800
	22d Division, General de Funck, *id.*	7600	700
	Cavalry, General de Gablentz, *id.*	2300	2600
	Artillery, Engineers, &c.	1200	1400
Eighth Corps. — The Duke of Abrantes (Junot).	23d Division, General Thareau, Westphalians, &c.	10,600	400
	24th Division, General d'Ochs	5200	400
	Cavalry, General Chabert	19,000	2000
	Artillery, Engineers, &c.	1000	1400
Ninth Corps. — The Duke of Belluno (Victor).	12th Division, General Parthonneaux, 10th, 29th, Light Infantry, 36th, 44th, 51st, 55th, 125th, and 126th of the line.	15,000	600
	26th Division, General Daendels, troops from Berg and Baden, Hessians, &c.	8000	700
	28th Division, General Girard, Poles.	7,500	2100
	Cavalry, Generals Delaitre and Fournier, troops from Berg, and Baden, Hessians, &c.	2,000	200

Digitized by Google

		Men.	Horses.
Tenth Corps. — The Duke of TARENTUM.	7th Division, General Grandjean, Poles, Westphalians, &c.	13,000	900
	27th Division, General d'Yorck, Prussians	14,000	
	Cavalry, Gen. Massemback, *id.*	2700	2700
	Artillery, &c.	1700	1700
Eleventh Corps. — Duke of CASTIGLIONE.	30th Division, General Leudilet, 2d, 4th, 6th, 8th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 21st, 28th, Light Infantry, 14th, 28th of the line, Westphalians, &c.	18,000	400
	31st Division, General Lagrange 27th, 63d of the line, &c.	9900	
	32d Division, General Durutte, the regiments of Walcheren, Belleisle, and the Mediterranean	12,700	
	34th Division, General Morant, 3d, 29th of the line, Hessians, Saxons, &c.	12,900	600
	Cavalry, General Cavaignac, Dragoons, Chasseurs	1600	1500
Prince Schwartzenberg.	Austrians	30,000	6000
1st Corps of Cavalry, General Nansouty.	1st Division of Light Horse, General Bruyères, 16th Chasseurs, 7th and 8th Hussars, Poles, Prussians, &c.	6500	6700
	1st Division of Heavy Horse, General St. Germain, 2d, 3d, 9th Cuirassiers, 1st Light Horse	3700	3800
	5th Division do. General Valence, 5th, 6th, 11th, 12th	3200	3300
2d Corps of Cavalry, General Montbrun.	2d Division of Light Horse, General Pajols, 11th, 12th Chasseurs, 5th, 9th Hussars, Prussians, Poles, &c.	4800	4900
	2d Division of Heavy Horse,		

Digitized by Google

		Men.	Horses.
2d Corps continued.	General Wathier, 5th, 8th, 10th Cuirassiers, 2d Light Horse	2700	2800
	4th Division do. General Defranc, 1st 2d carbiniers, 1st Curiassiers 4th do.	2900	2900
3d Corps of Cavalry, General Grouchy	3d Division of Light Horse, General Chastel, 6th, 8th, 25th Chasseurs, 6th Hussars, Bavarians, Saxons	4500	4700
	3d Divisions of Heavy Horse, General Doumerc, 4th, 7th, 14th Cuirassiers, 3d Light Horse	3300	3300
	6th Division do. General Lahousaye, 7th, 23d, 28th, 30th, 50th Dragoons	2800	3000
4th Corps of Cavalry, General Latour Maubourg.	4th Division of Light Horse, General Roznièçki, Poles ..	4600	5000
	7th Division do. General Lorge, Saxons, Westphalians, &c...	3200	3500
Imperial Guard.	Imperial Guard, Infantry, Cavalry, Artillery, &c.....	43,000	16000
	Division of the Vistula, General Claparede, Poles, &c.....	8300	500
Grand Park.	Grand Park of Artillery, General Lariboissiere	9500	4800
	Grand Park of Engineers, General Chasseloup Laubat....	5100	900
	Waggon Train, General Picard	7800	9300
Garrisons.	Magdebourg, General Michaud	900	
	Dantzig, General Lagrange....	3000	1000
	Stettin, General Liobert.....	These Garrisons formed part of the different Corps.	
	Custrin, General Fomier d'Albe		
	Glogau, Laplane		
	Berlin, General Durutte.....		
	Stralsund, General Morand ..		
	Kœnigsberg, General Loison ..	5000	200

Digitized by Google

		Men.	Horses.
General Carra St. Cyr.	Troops of the Princes of the Confederation	7300	300
General D'Estrees.	Neapolitan Troops	8000	1000
Garrison of Hamburgh, General Carra St. Cyr.	Cohorts of the National Guard of the first van, &c.	5700	
General Eswald.	Danish Troops	9800	2000
Troops on the March.	Infantry	25,000	
	Cavalry	14,000	14000
	Artillery, Engineers, &c.	4000	2500
Depôts of Cavalry, General Boucier.	Detachments of all the regiments of Cavalry	1500	600

Digitized by Google

RECAPITULATION.

	Men.	Horses.
Staff	4000	1150
First Corps	83,000	11,500
Second do.	44,100	7000
Third do.	43,800	8700
Fourth do.	52,000	10,500
Fifth do.	39,500	9100
Sixth do.	27,400	3800
Seventh do.	18,000	5500
Eighth do.	18,700	4300
Ninth do.	32,500	4500
Tenth do.	31,400	5300
Eleventh do.	55,100	2500
Austrian auxiliary Corps	30,000	6000
Imperial Guard	51,300	16,500
Grand Park	22,400	15,000
Garrisons (Dantzig, Magdebourg, Kœnigsberg, Hamburgh)	14,600	1200
Troops of the Princes of the Confederation	7300	300
Neapolitans	8000	1000
Danish Troops	9800	2000
Troops on the March	43,000	16,500
Depôt of Cavalry	1500	600
First Corps of Cavalry	13,400	13,800
Second	10,400	10,600
Third	10,600	11,000
Fourth	7800	8500
	680500	176850

Digitized by Google

The following Statement of the effective Force of the French Army is taken from an excellent Critique on Labaume in the Quarterly Review ;—it is given on the authority of a Westphalian Officer.

Westphalians	30,000
Bavarians	40,000
Wirtemburghers	16,000
Grand Duchy of Berg	3,000
Prussians	20,000
Austrians	30,000
From Baden	5,000
Poles	60,000
Swiss, French, Spaniards, and Portuguese	300,000
Various	20,000
Total	524,000

FINIS.

DIRECTIONS TO THE BINDER.

Large Map to face the Title.

Plan of the Battle of the Moskwa, to face page ..... 131.

——————— Malo-Jaroslavitz, to face page 252.

Printed by W. Clowes,
Northumberland-court, Strand, London.

4

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THIS BOOK IS DUE ON THE LAST DATE STAMPED BELOW

AN INITIAL FINE OF 25 CENTS

WILL BE ASSESSED FOR FAILURE TO RETURN THIS BOOK ON THE DATE DUE. THE PENALTY WILL INCREASE TO 50 CENTS ON THE FOURTH DAY AND TO $1.00 ON THE SEVENTH DAY OVERDUE.

INTERLIBRARY LOAN

OCT 4 1941

AUG 15 1984

UNIV. OF CALIF., BERK.

NOV 26 1941

MAY 1 1947

21Apr'58 M

Received in Interlibrary Loan

MAY 21 1958

REC'D LD SEP 6 1984

APR 24 1958

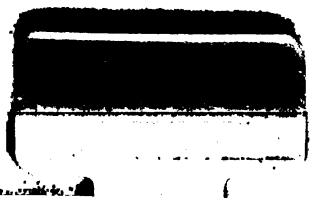
LD 21-100m-7,'40(6936s)

YC 75296



979153 DC235 L24

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY



Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google